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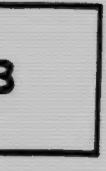

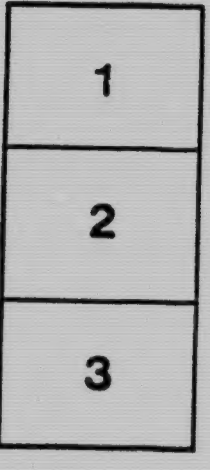

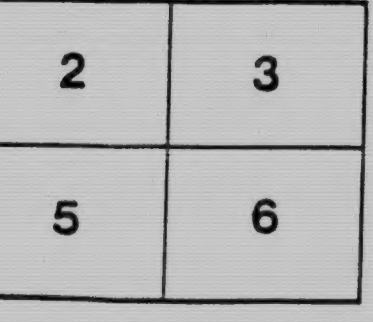

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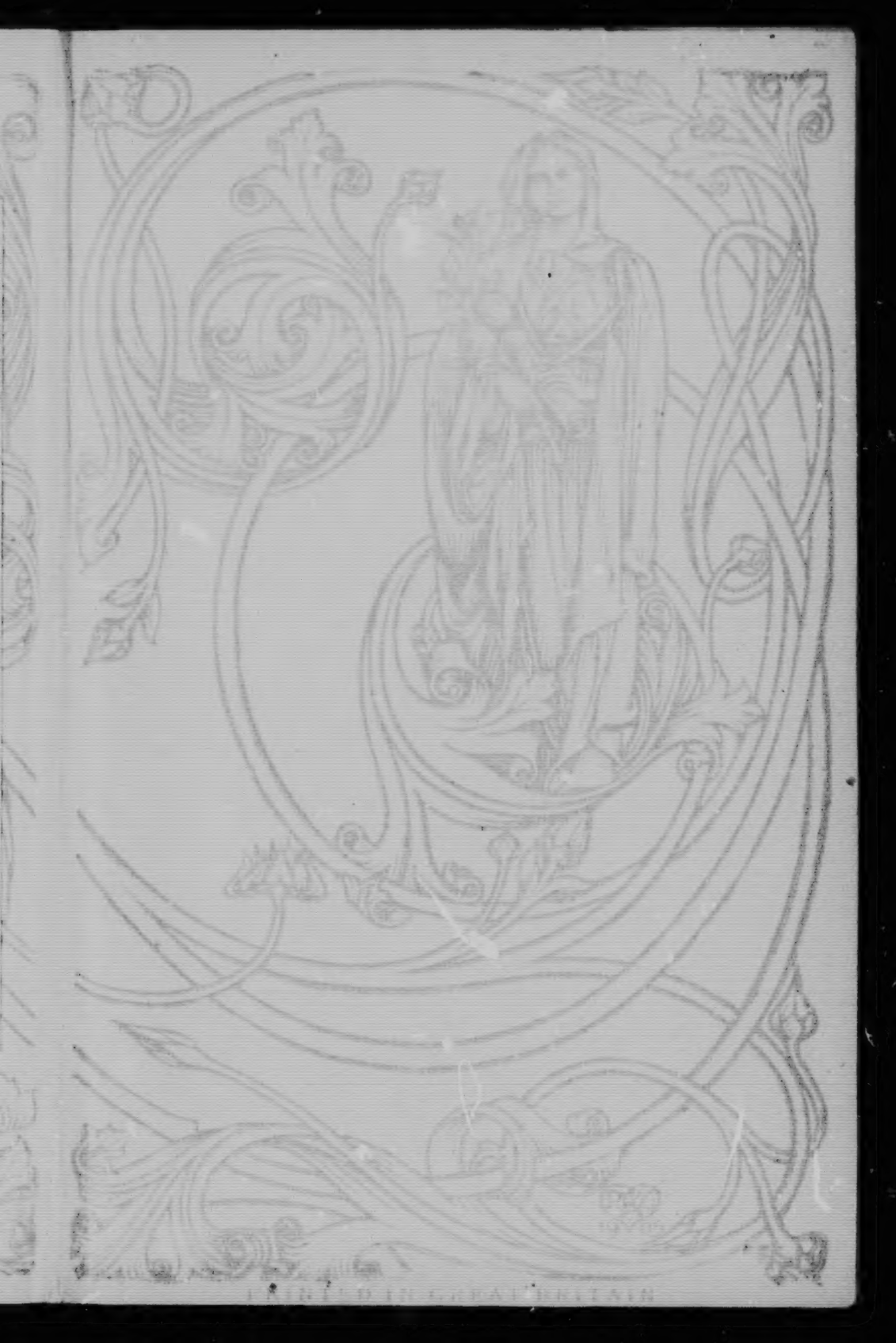

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THE DRAMA

THE PRETENDERS, PILLARS OF SOCIETY, AND ROSMERSHOLM, BY HENRIK IBSEN. TRANSLATED BY R. FARQUHARSON SHARP

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ARE
THE
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WHICH SING
TO BATTLE
POETS
ARE THE
UNACKNOWL-
EDGED
LEGISLATORS
OF THE
WORLD SHELLEY

THE PRETENDERS AND TWO OTHER PLAYS BY HENRIK IBSEN

LONDON & TORONTO
PUBLISHED BY J·M·DENT
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INTRODUCTION

THE three plays translated in the present volume illustrate three very different and characteristic phases of Ibsen's genius. The stirring historical drama, *The Pretenders*, which appeared in 1864 and was his first really great achievement, was written at white heat when Ibsen was five-and-thirty and his intellectual powers were just touching their full development. *Pillars of Society*, which was completed in 1877, was the earliest of the "social dramas" on which his fame will always mainly rest, and betrays some signs of experiment. In it the dramatist has not yet quite found his feet on the ground which he trod with the triumphant assurance of a master by the time *Rosmersholm*, which is typical of his intellectual power at its highest, appeared in 1886.

The Pretenders was written while Ibsen was still in Christiania, previous to his long voluntary exile from Norway. He had, some years before, been attracted by the subject of the historical struggle between Haakon and Skule for the crown; and circumstances now seemed to conspire (or, at least, Ibsen seems to have thought so) to give him a clearer insight into the conflict of character between the two heroes. The rough handling which his countrymen had accorded to his last play, *Love's Comedy*, and the small advance he had been able (in spite of the growth of his powers) to make in popular estimation, contrasted cruelly in his eyes with the rapidly increasing popularity of his friend and rival, Björnson, who was advancing from success to success with serene confidence. These were the circumstances that enabled Ibsen to portray so vividly in *The Pretenders* Skule's anxious craving for success, and the conflict between his torturing lack of self-confidence and his uneasy consciousness that Haakon's success, though easier, was deserved.

The play is a remarkably fine example of historical drama, and, both in conception and execution, is an astonishing advance on *The Warriors at Helgeland*,[1] which preceded it by only five years. Every character in *The Pretenders* is alive and well individualised; the whole play is full of movement; many passages in the dialogue show a subtlety of thought well worthy of the later Ibsen; and—besides the two contrasted figures of Haakon and Skule, and the sweet womanliness of Margrete, torn by her divided emotions as wife of the one combatant and daughter of the other—the play contains, in the sinister figure of Bishop Nicholas and the ingenuity of his malicious intrigue, a study of character of which any dramatist might be proud. Moreover, the gradual revelation, as the play proceeds, of the train of intrigue laid by the Bishop is a significant foreshadowing of Ibsen's later method in that respect, a method seen at its fullest use in *Rosmersholm*. Skule's personality, too, is not unlike that of an early and more rudimentary Rosmer. The ill-judged lapse into the supernatural in the second scene of the last act, with the Bishop's reappearance as a phantom monk and his outburst of prophetical rhetoric, is the only blot on the play.

The Pretenders was written in a few months, and was produced in Christiania early in 1864, with complete success. So little, however, was Ibsen's name known at the time, that it was seven years before the play was seen in Denmark, and eight more before it reached Stockholm, though it had been played in Germany in 1875. It had never been acted in this country until February of the present year, when an interesting production of it, though necessarily somewhat reduced in its proportions, took place at the Haymarket theatre. The play's name in the original, *Kongs-Emnerne*, is difficult to translate. *The Pretenders*, a title first adopted by Mr. William Archer in his translation, is a useful equivalent; but the original name has more the sense of "Heirs to the Crown," or "Men of Royal

[1] Published in the volume of Ibsen's plays entitled *Ghosts, and Two Other Plays*, in "Everyman's Library."

Breed"—the Norwegian word *Emne* signifying literally "subject-matter" or "material."

Pillars of Society (*Samfundets Stötter*) found a readier home on the stage, not only in Ibsen's own country but in others. From his retreat in Italy he had (in the years intervening between *The Pretenders* and this play) sent *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* to astonish and delight his fellow-countrymen and to lay the foundations of a wider fame. *Pillars of Society* was first produced in Copenhagen in 1877, and soon became an established favourite in the theatres of the other Scandinavian countries and of Germany. One or two isolated performances of it have been given in this country, also in America and in France. Mr. William Archer, in an interesting introduction to his version of the play, points out that the reason why, except in Scandinavia and Germany, it has nowhere taken a permanent hold upon the theatre, is easy to find; for, "by the time the English, American and French public had fully awakened to the existence of Ibsen, he himself had so far outgrown the phase of his development marked by *Pillars of Society*, that the play already seemed commonplace and old-fashioned."

However that may be, the play has great interest to the student of Ibsen from the fact of its being its author's first serious effort in the social drama, and his first experiment with methods which he subsequently perfected. It is an entertaining play, moreover, with a plot that is a model of ingenuity; and, though the "irony" of the drama may occasionally come a little too pat, it is at the same time undeniably effective. No doubt, too, the later Ibsen would not have allowed the guilty man to escape Nemesis to so great an extent, but would have let it swoop remorselessly upon him; but, at the time the play was written, such a thing would have irretrievably have ruined its chances of success—even if, indeed, it would have suggested itself to Ibsen at that stage of his development.

Nine years later, however, in *Rosmersholm*, remorselessness of logic and remorseless fidelity to the actual cruelties of life overshadow everything else. *A Doll's*

House, Ghosts, An Enemy of the People and *The Wild Duck* [1] had appeared since *Pillars of Society*. Ibsen's fame was assured, and his self-confidence established upon good grounds; his methods were perfected and his touch certain. But anything approaching gaiety of mind seems to have been ground out of him by the pitiless wheels of life and experience; *Rosmersholm* is surely one of the grimmest dramas ever penned.

The genesis of the idea of the play seems to have been to some extent political—Ibsen's disgust with the Norwegian democracy of the time, and with the personalities and animosities which were allowed to obscure the actual political issues of the day, impelling him to a plea for the recovery of "some elements of nobility" (as he himself put it) in national life. This accounts for the mission which Rosmer, in the play, imagines to be his. The interest of this, however, is local. What is far more absorbing in the play is the development and conflict of character; the astonishing cleverness with which, gradually, veil after veil is lifted that has concealed Rebecca's true nature and the extent of her machinations; the pitiless veracity of the self-analysis with which she and Rosmer torture themselves; the master-hand evident in the structure of the play.

It was first performed in Bergen, early in 1887, and soon took a firm hold on the Scandinavian and German stages. It has been at various times played here, as well as in France and Italy. From the interesting posthumous volume of notes and memoranda of Ibsen's (translated lately into English with the title of *From Ibsen's Workshop*), we learn that *Rosmersholm* was at first to have been called *White Horses;* also that, in an early draft of the play, Rebecca was governess to two daughters of Rosmer's, who, however, eventually disappeared from the play and reappeared as Boletta and Hilda Wangel in *The Lady from the Sea.*

R. Farquharson Sharp.

March 1913.

[1] All translated in the volumes of Ibsen's plays in "Everyman's Library."

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THE PRETENDERS

AN HISTORICAL DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Haakon, elected King of Norway by the "Birchlegs." [1]
Inga, his mother.
Dagfinn, his marshal.
Ivar Bodde, his chaplain.
Earl Skule.
Ragnhild, his wife.
Sigrid, his sister.
Margrete, his daughter.
Nicholas, Bishop of Oslo.
Sira Viljam, his chaplain.
Guthorm Ingesson.
Sigurd the Ribbung.
Vegard Væradal, one of Haakon's body-guard.
Gregorius Jonsson, } vassals.
Paul Flida, }
Ingebjörg, wife of Andres Skjalderband.
Peter, her son, a young priest.
Sigard, of Brabant, a physician.
Jatgeir, an Icelandic bard.
Bratte, a bard and chieftain from the Trondhjem district.
People and Citizens of Bergen. Oslo and Nidaros; Crusaders, Priests, Monks and Nuns; Guests, Guards, Women, Men-at-Arms, etc., etc.

(The action takes place in the first half of the thirteenth century.)

1 *One of the numerous political factions which existed in Norway at this period. They owed their name to the fact of their wearing leggings of birch-bark.*

THE PRETENDERS

ACT I

SCENE I

(SCENE.—*The churchyard of Christ Church in Bergen. In the background the main entrance of the church faces the audience. In the foreground, on the left, are standing* HAAKON, [illegible]AGFINN, VEGARD VÆRADAL, IVAR BODDE *and other vassals and chieftains; opposite them, on the right,* SKULE, GREGORIUS JONSSON, PAUL FLIDA, *and others of* SKULE'S *men. Farther back on the same side are seen* SIGURD THE RIBBUNG *and his followers, and, standing apart from them,* GUTHORM INGESSON *with other chieftains. The approach to the church is guarded by armed men; the churchyard is crowded with people, and many are perched on the trees and church walls. Every one seems to be in the greatest suspense, as if waiting for something to happen. Bells are ringing in all the church steeples in the town, far and near.*)

Skule (*to* GREGORIUS JONSSON, *in a low voice full of impatience*). Why are they so slow in there?

Gregorius. Hush!—I hear the psalm beginning. (*The sound of trumpets is heard through the closed doors of the church; then the choir of monks and nuns, chanting the* "Domine cœli." *Meanwhile the doors of the church are thrown open from within, and* BISHOP NICHOLAS *appears in the porch, surrounded by priests and friars.*)

Bishop Nicholas (*stepping forward and raising his crozier*). Now is Inga of Varteig submitting to the Ordeal of the Iron on behalf of Haakon, heir to the crown! (*The church doors are shut again; the chanting is still heard from within.*)

Gregorius Jonsson (*in a low voice, to* SKULE). Pray to St. Olaf to defend the right.

Skule (*hastily and with a gesture of refusal*). Not now. It were best not to put him in mind of me.

Ivar Bodde (*gripping* HAAKON *by the arm.*) Pray to the Lord your God, Haakon.

Haakon. There is no need. I am sure of Him. (*The sound of chanting grows louder from within the church. All bare their heads; many fall on their knees and pray.*)

Gregorius Jonsson (*to* SKULE). This is a fateful hour for you and for many.

Skule (*looking anxiously towards the church*). A fateful hour for Norway.

Paul Flida (*standing beside* SKULE). Now she is holding the Iron.

Dagfinn (*beside* HAAKON). They are coming down the nave.

Ivar Bodde. Christ protect thy innocent hands, Inga, mother of the King!

Haakon. All my days I will surely repay her for this hour.

Skule (*who has been listening anxiously, exclaims suddenly*): Did she scream? Did she let the Iron drop?

Paul Flida (*going towards the church*). I do not know what it was.

Gregorius Jonsson. The women are weeping loudly in the porch.

(*A triumphant chant from the choir breaks in upon their voices:* Gloria in excelsis Deo! *The doors of the church are thrown open;* INGA *comes out, followed by nuns, priests and monks.*)

Inga (*standing on the steps of the church*). God has judged! Behold these hands; in them I have held the Iron!

Voices from the Crowd. They are as pure and white as before!

Other Voices. And still fairer!

The whole Crowd. He is indeed the son of Haakon, who was Sverre's son!

Haakon (*embracing* INGA). Thanks, thanks, most blessed among women!

Bishop Nicholas (*as he brushes past* SKULE). It was a stupid thing to insist on the Ordeal of the Iron.

Skule. No, Bishop Nicholas; in this matter we needed the voice of God.

Haakon (*deeply moved, and holding* INGA *by the hand*). So now the deed is done against which every fibre in my being cried out aloud—the thought of which wrung my heart with anguish—

Dagfinn (*to the crowd*). Yes, look upon this woman and then think well, all you who are here! Who was there that doubted her word until certain men found it to their interest that it should be doubted?

Paul Flida. The doubt has been whispered in every corner since the hour when Haakon, heir to the crown, was carried as a child into King Inge's halls.

Gregorius Jonsson. And last winter the whisper grew into a clamour and resounded throughout the land, from north to south. To that I think every man can bear witness.

Haakon. I myself best of all. And it was for that reason that I gave way to the counsel of many faithful friends, and humbled myself as no other king-elect has done for many a day. By the Ordeal of the Iron I have proved my birth, and proved my right, as the son of Haakon, son of Sverre, to inherit the kingship of this land. It is not my purpose now to inquire more closely who was the begetter of this doubt and proclaimed it with so loud a voice as Earl Skule's friends say; but this I do know, that bitterly have I suffered under it. King-elect I have been ever since I was a child; but little has been the kingly honour that I have received, even at the hands of those from whom one would think I could most surely expect it. I will only remind you of what took place last Palm Sunday at Nidaros,[1] when I went up to the altar to make my offering and the Archbishop turned away and made as though he had not seen me, so as to avoid saluting me as men are wont to salute kings. Still, it would have been easy to put up with such slights as that, had it not been that the country was on the brink of an outbreak of civil war, and my duty was to prevent that.

Dagfinn. No doubt it is well for kings to listen to

[1] The ancient name of Trondhjem.

counsels of prudence; but if my counsel had been heeded in the matter, it would not have been with the hot iron but with cold steel that justice would have been done between Haakon and his enemies.

Haakon. Control yourself, Dagfinn. The man who is to rule a kingdom must learn to rule himself.

Skule (*with a slight smile*). It is easy to call every man the king's enemy whose mind does not jump with the king's. I would rather say that the king's worst foe is the man who would dissuade him from making good his right to the kingly title.

Haakon. Who knows? If it were only my *right* to the kingship that were in question, maybe I had not bought it so dear. But there are higher things to be thought of—my vocation, and my duty. I feel within me the certainty—nor do I blush to say it—that I alone am the man who, in these troublous times, can steer the ship of state into safe waters. Kingly birth carries with it kingly duties—

Skule. There is more than one here who will say the same high-sounding words of himself.

Sigurd the Ribbung. That do I, and with full as good a right! My father's father was King Magnus, the son of Erling—

Haakon. Yes, if your father Erling Stejnvæg *was* King Magnus' son; but most men deny it, and as yet none has undergone the Ordeal of the Iron to prove it true.

Sigurd. The Ribbungs chose me as king, and did it of their own free will. Dagfinn and others of the Birch-legs won you your kingly title by threats.

Haakon. Yes, to such a pass had you brought Norway that one of Sverre's line must needs make use of threats to gain his rights.

Guthorm Ingesson. I am of Sverre's line, as much as you—

Dagfinn. But not on your father's side.

Bishop Nicholas. There are women between you and the direct line, Guthorm.

Guthorm. Anyway I know this, that my father Inge was lawfully chosen King of Norway.

Haakon. Because there was no one that knew Sverre's grandson to be alive. From the day when that was proclaimed, he ruled the kingdom in trust for me—but not otherwise.

Skule. That cannot be truly said. Inge was king all his life, with all lawful power and without restraint. Likely enough Guthorm has but little right to the throne, for he is a bastard; but I am King Inge's lawfully begotten brother, and I have the law on my side if I claim to take my heritage in full.

Dagfinn. Truly, my lord earl, you have taken your heritage in full, and that not only of your father's family possessions but of everything that Haakon, son of Sverre, left behind him.

Bishop Nicholas. Not everything, my good Dagfinn. Respect the truth. King Haakon has kept a brooch and the gold bracelet he wears on his arm.

Haakon. No matter for that!—with God's help I will win myself wealth again. And now, ye noblemen and vassals, priests, chieftains and guards, now is it time for all to meet in council as is customary. I have sat with tied hands until to-day; none, I imagine, will blame me for longing to have them loosed.

Skule. There are others in the same case as you, Haakon.

Haakon (*his attention aroused*). My lord earl, what do you mean by that?

Skule. I mean that all of us heirs to the crown have good reason for the same longing. We have all of us alike been hampered, for none of us has known how far his rights would carry him.

Bishop Nicholas. The Church, too, has stood on no more certain ground than the State. But now our sainted King Olaf's law must be the arbiter.

Dagfinn (*half aloud*). Another trick! (HAAKON'S *men gather more closely together.*)

Haakon (*making an effort to control himself, and striding a few steps nearer to* SKULE). I prefer to believe that I have not taken your meaning aright. The Ordeal of the Iron has established my undoubted right to the throne; and therefore, so far as I can see, nothing

remains but for the Council of State to add its legal sanction to the choice the Örething [1] made six years ago when it elected me king.

Voices from among Skule's and Sigurd's men. No, no—we deny that!

Skule. That was never the intention when it was decided that we should hold a Council here. The Ordeal of the Iron has not yet won you the crown; it has only established your title to come forward to-day with the others of us heirs to the throne and maintain the claim you profess to have—

Haakon (*restraining himself*). That is to say, in fact, that for six years I have had no right to the kingly title I have borne; that it has been without any legal right that you, my lord earl, have for the last six years ruled the land as regent on my behalf.

Skule. By no means. The kingly office had to be continued at my brother's death; and the Birchlegs—and chief among them Dagfinn—hotly espoused your cause, and procured your election before we others could come forward with our claims.

Bishop Nicholas (*to* HAAKON). Earl Skule means that that election gave you the usufruct of the kingly power, but no right of ownership in it.

Skule. You have retained all its privileges in your hands; but Sigurd the Ribbung and Guthorm Ingesson and I each hold ourselves to be as fully entitled to the inheritance as you, and now the law must decide between us and say who shall hold the inheritance for all time.

Bishop Nicholas. It must be admitted that the Earl has good grounds for what he says.

Skule. For a year or two past, there has more than once been talk of the Ordeal of the Iron and of a Council of State, but something has always come in the way of it. And, my lord Haakon, if you believed that your original election as king established your right immovably, why did you give your consent to the proposal to make trial of the Ordeal of the Iron?

Dagfinn (*exasperated*). Draw your swords, King's men! Let *them* decide the question!

[1] The popular assembly.

Voices from Haakon's bodyguard (*who are pressing forward*). To arms! Down with the king's enemies!

Skule (*calling to his own men*). Kill no one! Harm no one! Only keep them at a distance.

Haakon (*restraining his men*). Put up your swords, every one of you! Put up your swords, I say! (*Calmly.*) You make things tenfold worse for me by such behaviour.

Skule. It is thus that every man in the land stands, with his sword drawn against his neighbour. You see it for yourself, Haakon; and it seems to me to reveal clearly what is your duty, if your country's peace and your fellow-countrymen's lives are indeed dear to you.

Haakon (*after a moment's thought*). Yes—I see that. (*He takes* INGA *by the hand and turns to one of the men that are standing around him.*) Torkell, you were a man my father trusted to the full; take this woman, give her shelter by your hearth, and be good to her. Haakon the son of Sverre loved her dearly. God bless you, my mother!—I must away to the Council. (INGA *clasps hands with him and then goes with* TORKELL. HAAKON *is silent for a while, then strides forward and says in clear tones:*) The law shall decide, and the law alone. You Birchlegs, who were with me at the Örething and chose me for your king, now are you released from the oath you swore to me then. You, Dagfinn, are no longer my marshal; I will go attended by neither marshal nor body-guard, neither men-at-arms nor sworn henchmen. I am a poor man; my sole inheritance is a brooch and this gold armlet—a scanty store out of which to repay so many good men's services. Now, fellow-claimants for the throne, there is no difference between us! I shall have the advantage of you in nothing, except the right which I have from above—*that* I neither can nor will share with any man! Sound the summons for the Council, and may God and our sainted King Olaf's law decide between us!

(*He goes out with his men to the left. The sound of horns is heard in the distance.*)

Gregorius Jonsson (*to* SKULE, *as crowd begins to disperse*). During the Ordeal of the Iron I thought you

seemed afraid, and now you look happy and of good cheer!

Skule (*with a happy expression*). Did you see how like his eyes were to Sverre's, as he spoke? Whether it be he or I that is chosen for king, the choice will be a good one.

Gregorius Jonsson (*uneasily*). But do not give way. Remember how many men's fortunes are bound up with yours.

Skule. I take my stand on the ground of right. I have no cause to fear Saint Olaf now. (*Goes out to the left with his followers.*)

Bishop Nicholas (*hurrying to catch up* DAGFINN). Things are moving, my good Dagfinn, things are moving; but keep Earl Skule well apart from the king when he has been elected; see that you keep them well apart! (*All go out to the left and behind the church.*)

SCENE II

(SCENE.—*A room in the King's Palace. In the foreground on the left is a low window; on the right the entrance door; at the back, bigger doors leading to the King's Hall. A table stands by the window; also some chairs and benches.* RAGNHILD *and* MARGRETE *come in through the smaller door, almost immediately followed by* SIGRID.)

Ragnhild. Let us stay here.

Margrete. Yes, there is least light here.

Ragnhild (*going to the window*). And from here we can look down upon the Council Field.

Margrete (*looking out timidly*). Yes, they are all gathered there at the back of the church. (*Turns away in tears.*) And now must a deed be done there that will be big with consequences for many!

Ragnhild. Who will be master in these halls to-morrow, I wonder?

Margrete. Oh, hush! So heavy a day as this I never thought to see.

Ragnhild. It had to be. It was no fit work for *him* to be merely regent.

Margrete. Yes, it had to be. The mere title of kingship would never have been enough for *him.*

Ragnhild. Of whom do you speak?

Margrete. Of Haakon.

Ragnhild. I was speaking of your father.

Margrete. There are no more splendid men living than they two!

Ragnhild. Do you see Sigurd the Ribbung? How crafty he looks, as he sits there—like a wolf in chains.

Margrete. Yes, look at him—how he sits with his hands crossed on his sword-hilt in front of him and his chin resting on them.

Ragnhild. He gnaws his moustache and laughs—

Margrete. How hatefully he laughs!

Ragnhild. He knows that not a voice will be raised in his favour—that is what angers him. Who is it that is speaking now?

Margrete. It is Gunnar Grjonbak.

Ragnhild. Is he for your father?

Margrete. No, surely he is for the king—

Ragnhild (*looking at her*). For whom, did you say?

Margrete. For Haakon.

Ragnhild (*looks out; then says, after a short silence*): Where is Guthorm Ingesson sitting? I do not see him.

Margrete. Behind his men—there, right at the back—in a long cloak.

Ragnhild. Ah, yes.

Margrete. He looks as though he were ashamed.

Ragnhild. He is—on his mother's account.

Margrete. Haakon need not be that!

Ragnhild. Who is speaking now?

Margrete (*looking out*). Tord Skolle, from Ranafylke.

Ragnhild. Is *he* for your father?

Margrete. No—for Haakon.

Ragnhild. How unmoved your father sits, and listens.

Margrete. Haakon sits quiet in thought—but full of strength nevertheless. (*Impetuously.*) If any chance wayfarer stood here, he would pick out those two amongst all the thousand others.

Ragnhild. See, Margrete—Dagfinn is bringing forward a gilded chair for Haakon—

Margrete. And Paul Flida has set just such another behind my father—

Ragnhild. Haakon's men are trying to prevent him!

Margrete. And my father is holding fast to the chair—!

Ragnhild. Haakon is speaking angrily to him—(*shrinks back from the window with a cry*). Oh, my God! Did you see his eyes—and his smile! No, that surely was never your father!

Margrete (*who has followed her, with terror in her eyes*). Nor Haakon either!—neither my father nor Haakon!

Sigrid (*at the window*). How pitiful! How pitiful!

Margrete. Sigrid!

Ragnhild. You here!

Sigrid. That men should have to descend to such depths in order to climb up to the throne!

Margrete. Pray with us that all may be guided for the best.

Ragnhild (*turning a pale and terror-stricken face to* SIGRID). Did you see him? Did you see my husband? Such eyes and such a smile—I should never have known him.

Sigrid. Did he look like Sigurd the Ribbung?

Ragnhild (*in a low voice*). Yes, he looked like Sigurd the Ribbung.

Sigrid. Did he laugh like Sigurd?

Ragnhild. Yes, yes!

Sigrid. Then must we all pray.

Ragnhild (*with the strength of despair*). The Earl *must* be chosen king! It will be the ruin of his soul if he be not the first man in the land!

Sigrid (*more firmly*). Then must we all pray!

Ragnhild. Hush, what is that! (*Goes to the window.*) What a shout! They have all risen up—all their banners and standards are fluttering in the wind.

Sigrid (*grasping her by the arm*). Pray, woman! Pray for your husband!

Ragnhild. Blessed Saint Olaf, give him all the power in the land!

Sigrid (*wildly*). No, none!—none! Otherwise he cannot be saved!

Ragnhild. He *must* have power. Everything that is good in him will grow and bear fruit, if he have that.—Look out, Margrete! Listen! (*Steps back from the window.*) They have all raised their hands to take an oath! (MARGRETE *goes to the window and listens.*) Christ and Saint Olaf!—an oath to whom?

Sigrid. Pray! (MARGRETE, *as she listens, lifts her hand to silence them.*)

Ragnhild (*after a moment*). Speak! (*Loud blasts of trumpets and horns are heard from the Council Field.*) Christ and Saint Olaf!—to whom was the oath? (*A short silence.*)

Margrete (*turning her head away*). They have chosen Haakon for their King.

(*The music of the royal procession is heard, at first faintly and then growing nearer.* RAGNHILD *throws herself weeping into the arms of* SIGRID, *who takes her quietly out to the right.* MARGRETE *stands motionless, leaning against the frame of the window. The King's servants open the great doors, through which can be seen the King's Hall, which gradually fills with the procession from the Council.*)

Haakon (*turning to* IVAR BODDE *at the door*). Bring me a pen, and wax and silk—I have parchment here. (*Advances, evidently deeply moved, to the table, and lays some rolls of parchment down on it.*) Margrete, now I am King!

Margrete. I salute my lord and King.

Haakon. Thank you! (*Looks at her and takes her by the hand.*) Forgive me; I had forgotten that it must hurt you.

Margrete (*drawing her hand away*). It does not hurt me. You were born to be king.

Haakon (*eagerly*). Yes, indeed!—must not any man say so who remembers how wonderfully God and the Holy Saints have guarded me from all harm? I was but a year old when the Birchlegs bore me over the mountains, in frost and storm, cutting their way through the midst of those who would have had my

life. In Nidaros I escaped unharmed from the Baglers [1] when they set fire to the town and slew so many of our men, while King Inge himself only saved his life with difficulty by climbing on to his ship by the anchor cable.

Margrete. You had a hard bringing-up.

Haakon (*looking at her fixedly*). Something tells me now that you might have made it less hard for me.

Margrete. I?

Haakon. You might have been such a good foster-sister to me all the years we were growing up together.

Margrete. But things fell out otherwise.

Haakon. Yes—things fell out otherwise. We used to sit looking at each other, each in our own corner, but we seldom spoke. (*Impatiently.*) Why is he so long? (IVAR BODDE *enters, bringing writing materials.*) At last! Give me the things. (*Sits down at the table and writes. Presently* SKULE *comes in, followed by* DAGFINN, BISHOP NICHOLAS *and* VEGARD VÆRADAL. HAAKON *looks up and lays down his pen.*) My lord earl, do you know what I am writing here? (SKULE *goes nearer to him.*) It is to my mother. I thank her for all her goodness to me, and kiss her a thousand times—in my letter, you understand. She shall be sent eastwards, to the province of Borga, where she shall live in full royal state.

Skule. Do you not mean to keep her here in your palace?

Haakon. She is too dear to me, my lord. A king must have none about him that are too dear to him; he must act with free hands, and stand alone—he must never be led nor tempted. There is so much to be mended in Norway. (*Resumes his writing.*)

Vegard Væradal (*in a low tone, to* BISHOP NICHOLAS). That was my advice about the Queen Mother.

Bishop Nicholas. I recognised your hand in it at once.

Vegard Væradal. But one good turn deserves another, you know.

Bishop Nicholas. Wait. I keep my promises.

Haakon (*giving a parchment to* IVAR BODDE). Fold

[1] The followers of Bishop Nicholas. The name was derived from the Latin *baculus*, the bishop's pastoral staff.

it, and take it to her yourself with a loving greeting from me.

Ivar Bodde (*who has run his eye over the parchment*). My lord—you say here this very day—!

Haakon. There is a favourable wind now; it is blowing down the fairway.

Dagfinn (*slowly*). Remember, my lord King, that she lay all last night on the altar steps in prayer and fasting.

Ivar Bodde. And no doubt she is weary after the Ordeal.

Haakon. True, true. My good, kind mother!—(*Collects himself.*) Yes, if she is too weary, let her wait until to-morrow.

Ivar Bodde. It shall be as you say. (*Lays a fresh sheet of parchment before* HAAKON.) But about the other, my lord?

Haakon. The other?—Ivar Bodde, I cannot do it.

Dagfinn (*pointing to the letter to the Queen Mother*). And yet you could do that.

Ivar Bodde. Every bond that is sinful must be broken.

Bishop Nicholas (*who meanwhile has come closer to the King*). Bind Earl Skule's hands now, King Haakon.

Haakon (*gloomily*). You think I *must* do it?

Bishop Nicholas. You will never buy your country's peace on any cheaper terms.

Haakon. Then I *can* do it. Give me the pen.

[*Writes.*

Skule (*to* BISHOP NICHOLAS, *who has crossed the room*). You have the King's ear, it seems.

Bishop Nicholas. For your advantage.

Skule. Do you mean it?

Bishop Nicholas. Before this evening you will thank me. (*Moves away.*)

Haakon (*holding out the parchment to* SKULE). Read that, my lord.

Skule (*reads, then looks amazedly at the King, and says, scarcely audibly*). You are breaking absolutely with Kanga?

Haakon. Yes, with Kanga, the maiden whom I have loved better than anything in the world. From this day forth she must never cross the King's path.

Skule. What you are doing is a fine thing, Haakon. I know well what it must cost you—

Haakon. Every one must go who is too dear to the King. Tie up the letter. (*Gives it to* IVAR BODDE.)

Bishop Nicholas (*leaning over the King's chair*). My lord King, you have made a great stride towards friendship with the Earl.

Haakon (*stretching out his hand to him*). Thanks, Bishop. You advised me for the best. Ask any boon of me, and I shall grant it.

Bishop Nicholas. Will you?

Haakon. I give you my kingly promise.

Bishop Nicholas. Then give Vegard Væradal a governorship in Haalogaland.

Haakon. Vegard? He is well-nigh the truest friend I have; I should be loth to send him so far from me.

Bishop Nicholas. A king's friends should be royally rewarded. Tie Earl Skule's hands in the way I have advised you, and you are secure for all time.

Haakon (*taking a sheet of parchment*). Vegard shall have his governorship. (*Writes.*) This is my royal mandate to him. (BISHOP NICHOLAS *moves away.*)

Skule (*approaching the table*). What are you writing?

Haakon (*handing him the parchment*). Read.

Skule (*reads, then looks fixedly at the King*). Vegard Væradal? To Haalogaland?

Haakon. In the northern part, where there is a post vacant.

Skule. Surely you have forgotten that Andres Skjaldarband has a post in the north there? The two men are bitter enemies. Andres Skjaldarband is one of my men—

Haakon (*getting up, with a smile*). And Vegard Væradal one of mine. Therefore they must see that they be reconciled, and the sooner the better. From to-day there must be no strife between the King's men and the Earl's men.

Bishop Nicholas. Hm! This may turn out differently to what I intended. (*Comes nearer to the King, looking uneasy.*)

Skule. Your thoughts are wise and deep, Haakon.

Haakon (*warmly*). Earl Skule, I have taken a kingdom away from you to-day—but let your daughter share it with me!

Skule. My daughter?

Margrete. Oh, God!

Haakon. Margrete—will you be my queen? (MARGRETE *is silent.* HAAKON *takes her hand.*) Answer me.

Margrete. I will gladly be your wife.

Skule (*grasping* HAAKON'S *hand*). Peace and friendship from my heart.

Haakon. Thanks.

Ivar Bodde (*to* DAGFINN). Heaven be praised! The clouds are lifting!

Dagfinn. I almost believe they are. I have never liked Skule so well before.

Bishop Nicholas (*coming up behind them*). Be on your guard, my good Dagfinn; be on your guard.

Ivar Bodde (*to* VEGARD VÆRADAL). You are appointed to a governorship in Haalogaland; here is the royal warrant for you. (*Gives him the letter.*)

Vegard Væradal. I will thank the King for his favour later. (*Turns to go.*)

Bishop Nicholas (*restraining him*). Andres Skjaldarband is a rough customer. Do not let yourself be cowed by him.

Vegard Væradal. No one has ever done that yet. [*Goes out.*

Bishop Nicholas (*following him*). Be rock and flint against Andres Skjaldarband—and take my blessing with you as well.

Ivar Bodde (*who has waited behind the King with the parchments in his hands*). Here are the letters, my lord.

Haakon. Good. Give them to Earl Skule.

Ivar Bodde. To the Earl? Will you not seal them first?

Haakon. The Earl is accustomed to do that; he has the seal.

Ivar Bodde (*in a low voice*). Yes, he has done it hitherto—while he was regent for you; but now—?

Haakon. Now, as before. The Earl has the seal. [*Turns away.*

Skule. Give me the letters, Ivar Bodde. (*Goes to the table with them, takes the Royal Seal, which he wears attached to his belt, and begins to seal the letters.*)

Bishop Nicholas (*half aloud*). Haakon the son of Haakon is King—and Earl Skule holds the Royal Seal. Things are moving, things are moving.

Haakon. What are you saying, my lord bishop?

Bishop Nicholas. I was saying, may God and Saint Olaf watch over their holy Church.

Haakon (*going up to* MARGRETE). A prudent queen can do great things for her country. I have made my choice confidently, for I know you are prudent.

Margrete. Only that?

Haakon. What do you mean?

Margrete. Nothing, my lord, nothing.

Haakon. And you will bear me no ill-will for it, if you have given up some day-dreams for my sake?

Margrete. I have given up no day-dreams for your sake.

Haakon. And you will stay by my side, and give me good advice?

Margrete. I will gladly stay by your side.

Haakon. And give me good advice. Thank you for that. Every man can profit from a woman's advice, and from to-day I have no one but you. I was obliged to send my mother away—

Margrete. Yes, she was too dear to you.

Haakon. And I am King. Fare you well then, Margrete! You are so young still; but next summer our wedding shall take place, and from that hour I promise you that I will keep you with me in all due trust and honour.

Margrete (*with a sad smile*). Yes, I know it will be a long time before you send me away.

Haakon (*quickly*). Send you away? I shall never do that!

Margrete (*her eyes full of tears*). No, Haakon only does that to those who are too dear to him. (*Goes*

towards the door. HAAKON *looks ..ghtfully after her.*)

Ragnhild (*coming in from the right*). The King and the Earl in here so long together! My anxiety is killing me. Margrete, what has the King said and done?

Margrete. Oh, so much! The last things were to choose a governor for a province, and a queen.

Ragnhild. You, Margrete!

Margrete (*falling on her mother's neck*). Yes!

Ragnhild. You are to be Queen!

Margrete. Only his Queen—but I think I am glad even to be that. (*They go out together.*)

Skule (*to Ivar Bodde*). Here are your letters. Take them to the Queen Mother and to Kanga. (IVAR BODDE *bows and goes out.*)

Dagfinn (*at the door*). The Archbishop of Nidaros craves permission to pay his homage to King Haakon!

Haakon (*drawing a long breath*). At last I am King of Norway! (*Goes into the great hall.*)

Skule (*replacing the Royal Seal in his belt*). But I rule the country.

(*Curtain.*)

ACT II

(SCENE.—*The Banqueting-hall in the King's Palace at Bergen. In the middle of the back wall is a large bow-window, and along the wall a raised dais with seats for the women. Against the left-hand wall is the King's throne, raised a few steps from the floor. In the centre of the opposite wall are lofty entrance doors. Banners, standards, shields and weapons, mingled with many-coloured draperies, hang on the walls and the carved roof. The hall is set with tables bearing flagons, drinking-horns and beakers.* KING HAAKON *is seated on the dais with* MARGRETE, SIGRID, RAGNHILD *and a group of noble ladies.* IVAR BODDE *stands behind the King's chair. At the tables are seated the King's men,*

mingled with SKULE'S *men and guests. At the foremost table on the right are seated, amongst others,* DAGFINN, GREGORIUS JONSSON *and* PAUL FLIDA. SKULE *and* BISHOP NICHOLAS *are playing chess at a table on the left.* SKULE'S *servants pass to and fro, replenishing the flagons. During the following scene music is heard from an adjoining apartment.*)

Dagfinn. It is getting on now for the fifth day of this feasting, and yet the serving-men are as nimble as ever at filling up our flagons.

Paul Flida. It has never been Earl Skule's way to stint his guests.

Dagfinn. No, that is easily seen. So splendid a royal wedding has never been heard of in Norway before.

Paul Flida. Well, Earl Skule has never had a daughter married before.

Dagfinn. That is true. The Earl is a mighty fellow.

A Guest. He has a good third of the kingdom in his hands. That is more than any earl has ever had before.

Paul Flida. Still, the King's share is a bigger one.

Dagfinn. Do not let us talk of that here. We are all friends now, and all our differences are made up. (*Drinks to* PAUL FLIDA.) So let the King be king, and the Earl earl.

Paul Flida (*with a laugh*). It is easy to tell that you are a King's man.

Dagfinn. It is the Earl's men's duty to be that too.

Paul Flida. Never. We have taken an oath of fealty to the Earl, but not to the King.

Dagfinn. You may have to do it, all the same.

Bishop Nicholas (*in a lower voice to* SKULE, *as they play*). Do you hear what Dagfinn is saying?

Skule (*without looking up*). Of course I hear.

Gregorius Jonsson (*looking hard at* DAGFINN). Has the King that in his mind?

Dagfinn. Come, come—let it be. No quarrelling to-day.

Bishop Nicholas. The King means to exact an oath from your men, my lord.

Gregorius Jonsson (*more heatedly*). Has the King that in his mind, I ask you?

Dagfinn. I am not going to answer. Let us drink to peace and friendship between the King and Earl Skule. The ale is excellent.

Paul Flida. It has certainly had plenty of time to mature.

Gregorius Jonsson. Three times has the Earl prepared everything for the wedding, three times the King has promised to come—and three times has he disappointed the Earl.

Dagfinn. You must blame the Earl for that; he gave us plenty to occupy our time on the coast.

Paul Flida. Sigurd the Ribbung gave you still more to occupy your time in Vermeland, according to all accounts.

Dagfinn (*hotly*). Yes, and who was it that let Sigurd the Ribbung escape?

Gregorius Jonsson. Sigurd the Ribbung slipped through our fingers at Nidaros. Every one knows that.

Dagfinn. But does any one know that you tried to stop him?

Bishop Nicholas (*to* SKULE, *who is meditating over a move*). You hear that, my lord. It was you that let Sigurd the Ribbung escape.

Skule. That is an old story.

Gregorius Jonsson (*to* DAGFINN). I imagined you knew about the Icelander, Andres Torsteinsson, Sigurd's friend—

Dagfinn. Yes; when Sigurd had ecaped, you hanged the Icelander—I know that.

Bishop Nicholas (*with a laugh, as he makes a move*). I take your pawn, my lord.[1]

Skule (*aloud*). Take him. A pawn is of no great consequence. (*Moves a piece.*)

Dagfinn. No, the Icelander found that out when Sigurd escaped to Vermeland! (*Stifled laughter among the King's men. The conversation is continued in low*

[1] The Norwegian word "Bonde," which designates the "pawn" in chess, primarily means "peasant," "countryman," or "yeoman." It is impossible in translation to reproduce the play on the word in Skule's retort to the Bishop.

tones; and shortly afterwards a man comes in and whispers to GREGORIUS JONSSON.)

Bishop Nicholas. I make this move, and you are beaten.

Skule. So it seems.

Bishop Nicholas (*leaning back in his chair*). You did not look well after your king that time.

Skule (*upsetting the chess-men and getting up*). I got tired of defending my king long ago.

Gregorius Jonsson (*going up to* SKULE *and speaking in a low voice*). My lord, Jostein Tamb sends word that the ship is quite ready to sail.

Skule (*quietly*). Good. (*Takes a sealed parchment from his girdle*). Here is the letter.

Gregorius Jonsson (*shaking his head*). My lord, my lord—are you well advised to do this?

Skule. To do what?

Gregorius Jonsson. The King's seal is on it.

Skule. It is in the King's interest that I am acting.

Gregorius Jonsson. Then let the King refuse this for himself.

Skule. He will not do it, if it is left to him. All his efforts and thoughts are centred on subduing the Ribbungs, and that is why he wishes to secure himself in other directions.

Gregorius Jonsson. It may be all very clever that you are doing, but it is dangerous.

Skule. Leave that to me. Take the letter, and tell Jostein to sail at once.

Gregorius Jonsson. It shall be as you order. (*Goes out to the right, and comes in again shortly afterwards.*)

Bishop Nicholas (*to* SKULE). You have a deal to attend to, it seems.

Skule. And get but little thanks for it.

Bishop Nicholas. The King has risen. (*Haakon comes forward. They all stand up from the tables.*)

Haakon (*to* BISHOP NICHOLAS). We are all heartily glad to see how strong and well you have seemed during all these days of festivity.

Bishop Nicholas. It is just a flicker of life now and

then, your majesty; but it cannot last long. I have lain sick all the winter.

Haakon. Yes, yes. You have lived a vigorous life, rich in many famous deeds.

Bishop Nicholas. Oh, not to so very great an extent. There is still much left undone. If only one knew if there would be time to do it all!

Haakon. The living must always reap the inheritance from those that are gone, reverend sir. All of us alike, you know, wish the best for our country and its people. (*Turns to* SKULE.) One thing surprises me greatly, that none of our representatives in Haalogaland have come to grace our wedding.

Skule. It is quite true. I had confidently expected Andres Skjaldarband to come.

Haakon (*with a smile*). And Vegard Væradal too.

Skule. And Vegard too, yes.

Haakon (*jestingly*). And I hope you would have given my old friend a kindlier reception now than you did seven years ago on Oslo bridge, when your blade pierced his cheek through.

Skule (*with a constrained laugh*). Yes, the time when your mother's brother, Gunnulf, sliced off the right hand of Sira Ejliv, my best friend and counsellor.

Bishop Nicholas (*gaily*). And when Dagfinn and the other men-at-arms set a strong night-watch over the King's ship, and said he was unsafe in the Earl's hands!

Haakon (*gravely*). Those days are gone and forgotten.

Dagfinn (*approaching the* KING). We can sound the trumpets now for the tournament on the meadows below, if it please your majesty.

Haakon. Good. Let us enjoy ourselves to the full to-day; to morrow we must begin again to turn our thoughts to the Ribbungs and the Earl of Orkney.

Bishop Nicholas. He refuses to pay his tribute, I hear?

Haakon. If I had not the Ribbungs hanging round my neck, I would set sail for the west myself. (*He*

goes up to the dais, gives his hand to MARGRETE, *and takes her out to the right. The rest follow them gradually.*)

Bishop Nicholas (*to* IVAR BODDE). A word with you! Who is Jostein Tamb?

Ivar Bodde. There is a man here of that name who has come over from Orkney.

Bishop Nicholas. From Orkney? Indeed! And is going to sail back again now?

Ivar Bodde. Yes, I believe he is.

Bishop Nicholas (*lowering his voice*). With a valuable cargo, Ivar Bodde?

Ivan Bodde. Corn and cloth, I believe.

Bishop Nicholas. And a letter from Earl Skule.

Ivar Bodde (*with a start*). To whom?

Bishop Nicholas. I do not know. It bore the Royal Seal—

Ivar Bodde (*catching him by the arm*). My lord—are you speaking the truth?

Bishop Nicholas. Hush! Do not mix me up in the matter. (*Moves away from him.*)

Ivar Bodde. Then I must lose no time—! Dagfinn! Dagfinn! (*Pushes through the crowd to the door.*)

Bishop Nicholas (*to* GREGORIUS JONSSON, *in tones of sympathy*). Not a day but some man suffers loss, either of goods or of freedom!

Gregorius Jonsson. Who is suffering now?

Bishop Nicholas. An unfortunate seaman—Jostein Tamb, I think they called him.

Gregorius Jonsson. Jostein—?

Bishop Nicholas. Dagfinn means to prevent his sailing.

Gregorius Jonsson. Dagfinn means to prevent him, you say?

Bishop Nicholas. He has just gone out.

Gregorius Jonsson. Excuse me, my lord, I must make haste—

Bishop Nicholas. Yes, do, my good friend. Dagfinn is so hasty. (GREGORIUS JONSSON *hurries out to the right with the remainder of the guests.* SKULE *and* BISHOP NICHOLAS *are left alone in the hall.* SKULE

walks up and down, deep in thought; suddenly he seems to wake, and looks round him.)

Skule. How quiet it is here, all at once.

Bishop Nicholas. The King is gone.

Skule. And every one with him.

Bishop Nicholas. Every one except us.

Skule. It is a fine thing to be king.

Bishop Nicholas (*warily*). Would you like to try it, my lord?

Skule (*with a grave smile*). I *have* tried it. Every night, in my dreams, I am King of Norway.

Bishop Nicholas. Dreams are omens.

Skule. And temptations as well.

Bishop Nicholas. Surely not to you. In days gone by, I dare say; but now, when you possess a third of the realm, rule as the first man in the land, and are the father of the Queen—

Skule. Now most of all—now most of all.

Bishop Nicholas. Conceal nothing from me! Confess—because I know you are suffering cruelly.

Skule. Most of all now, as I said. The curse that lies heavy upon all my life is that I must stand so near to the highest place—with but one gulf between it and me—one leap would take me across it; and on the other side are the kingly title and purple robes, the throne—power—everything! Every day of my life it is there before my eyes—but I never can cross the gulf.

Bishop Nicholas. True, true.

Skule. When they made Guthorm the son of Sigurd king, I was in the fullest flush of youthful vigour. I seemed then to hear a voice within me saying: "Away with this child—*I* am a strong, grown man!" But Guthorm was a king's son. There lay the gulf between me and the throne.

Bishop Nicholas. And you did not dare—

Skule. Then the Slittungs swore allegiance to Erling Stejnvæg; and I heard the voice within me again: "Skule is a mightier chieftain than Erling Stejnvæg!" But it would have meant a rupture with the Birchlegs—and *that* was the gulf that time.

Bishop Nicholas. And Erling became king of the

Slittungs, and afterwards of the Ribbungs, and you waited!

Skule. I waited for Guthorm's death.

Bishop Nicholas. And Guthorm died, and Inge Baardsson, your brother, became king.

Skule. Then I waited for my brother's death. He was a sick man from the very first. Every morning, when we met at Mass, I used to sit stealing glances at him to see whether his sickness were not increased. Every spasm of pain that passed over his face was like a puff of wind in my sails, wafting me nearer to the throne. Every sigh that betrayed his pain and anguish sounded to me like the call of a horn from the distant mountain-side, like the summons of a messenger sent from afar to tell me that now I might take into my hands the sovereign power—so utterly had I rooted all brotherly affection out of my heart. Then Inge died and Haakon came, and the Birchlegs chose him for king.

Bishop Nicholas. And you waited.

Skule. I thought help must surely come to me from above. I felt the power of a king within me, but I was ageing. Each day that went by was a day filched from my life's work. Every evening I thought: "To-morrow there will happen a miracle which will strike him down, and set me upon his empty throne."

Bishop Nicholas. Haakon's power was then very small. He was but a child. You needed only to take one step—but you never took it.

Skule. It was hard to take. It would have cut me off from all my kin and all my friends.

Bishop Nicholas. Yes, that is just the point, my lord earl. That is just the curse that has lain upon your life. You want to keep every way open, in case of need; you dare not break all your bridges but one, and seek either victory or death defending that one. You devise snares for your enemy; you set traps to catch his feet, and hang keen-edged swords over his head; you sprinkle poison in every dish, and seek in endless ways to catch him in your toils. But as soon as he sets foot in one of your snares, you dare not pull

the string; if he stretches out his hand towards a poisoned dish, you deem it safer that he should die by the sword; if he gives you the opportunity of catching him in the morning, you come to the conclusion that it would be better for him to die in the evening.

Skule (*looking at him gravely*). And what would you do, my lord bishop?

Bishop Nicholas. Leave me out of the question. My task is to set up thrones in this land—not to sit upon them or to rule a people.

Skule (*after a short pause*). Answer me one thing, reverend sir—but answer me in all truth. How comes it that Haakon goes so unfalteringly forward? He is no shrewder than I, and no bolder.

Bishop Nicholas. Who do the greatest deeds in the world?

Skule. The greatest men.

Bishop Nicholas. And who are the greatest men?

Skule. The bravest.

Bishop Nicholas. There speaks the chieftain. A priest would say, the men who have most faith; a sage, the men who have most learning. But it is neither of these, my lord; it is the men who are the favourites of fortune. It is they who do the greatest deeds; they whom the needs of their day sweep irresistibly along, begetting thoughts that they themselves cannot understand, and pointing out to them paths leading they know not whither, but which their feet tread whether they will it or no—until they hear the shouts of a nation's joy, and look about them with wondering eyes to learn that they have accomplished a great achievement.

Skule. Yes, I see that unfaltering certainty in Haakon.

Bishop Nicholas. That is what the Romans called *ingenium*. I am not particularly strong in my Latin; but I know that was what they called *ingenium*.

Skule (*at first thoughtfully, but by degrees with growing excitement*). Am I to think that Haakon is made of different stuff from me? That he is one of

fortune's favourites—? Well, does not everything go well with him? Does not everything that he has to do with turn out for the best? The very country-folk notice it. They say that the trees have borne two crops of fruit, and the fowls hatched out two broods, every summer since Haakon has been king. Vermeland, which he burned and ravaged, is all fair again, its houses rebuilt and its fields laden with crops. It is as though blood and ashes did but enrich the soil when it is Haakon's hosts that have passed over it; it is as though the Lord spread a cloak of growing things over the ground Haakon had trampled down—as if the Powers of Holiness made haste to blot out his every transgression. And how easy his path to the throne has been made! He needed that Inge should die young, and Inge died. He needed defence and protection, and his men defended and protected him. He needed the Ordeal of the Iron, and his mother underwent it for his sake.

Bishop Nicholas (*in an involuntary outburst*). But we—we two—!

Skule. We?

Bishop Nicholas. You, of course—I mean you!

Skule. Haakon has right on his side, my lord bishop.

Bishop Nicholas. He has right on his side because he is fortunate; to have right on one's side is the greatest good fortune of all. But by what right has Haakon right on his side and not you?

Skule (*after a short pause*). There are some things I would pray God to preserve me from thinking about.

Bishop Nicholas. Did you never see an old picture that hangs in the church at Nidaros? It represents a flood, that is swelling and rising over all the hills till only a single peak is left uncovered. Up it are clambering a whole family—father and mother and son, and son's wife and child. And the son is hurling his father back into the flood in order to get a firmer footing, and will hurl down his mother after him, and his wife and all his children, if only he may reach the summit himself—because up there is a foot's breadth of dry land where he could find safety for an hour.

That, my lord, is the saga of wisdom and of every wise man.

Skule. But what of the right?

Bishop Nicholas. The son *had* the right. He had strength and the desire for life. Satisfy your desires and use your powers, as every man has the right to do.

Skule. When his object is a good one, yes.

Bishop Nicholas. You are merely playing with words! There is no such thing as good or evil, up or down, high or low. You must forget such words as those, or you will never take the last step—never leap over the gulf. (*Speaks in low but impressive tones.*) You must not hate a party or a cause because the party or the cause wish this or do not wish that; but you must hate every man in the party because he is opposed to you, and you must hate every one that supports a cause because the cause does not forward your ends. Whatever you can make use of, is good; whatever obstructs your path, is evil.

Skule (*looking straight in front of him thoughtfully*). What sacrifices have I not made for that throne, which nevertheless I have never reached! And what sacrifices has Haakon made, who now sits so securely on it? In my youth I gave up a sweet love that I cherished secretly, in order that I might marry into a powerful family. I prayed to the Saints that I might be blessed with a son—but I had nothing but daughters.

Bishop Nicholas. Haakon begets sons, my lord—mark that!

Skule (*crosses to the window on the right*). Yes—everything goes right for Haakon.

Bishop Nicholas (*following him*). While you are willing to let yourself be exiled from good fortune, all your life long! Are you blind? Can you not see that it is a greater power than that of the Birchleg rabble that stands at Haakon's back and blesses everything he does? His help comes from above—from the powers that fight against you and have been your enemies ever since you were born! And you bow your head before these enemies! Stand up, man! Stiffen

your back! What else was your indomitable soul given you for? Remember that the first great deed that ever was done was done by one who dared to revolt against a mighty empire!

Skule. Who?

Bishop Nicholas. The angel who stood in revolt against the Light!

Skule. And was cast down into the abyss—

Bishop Nicholas (*wildly*). And founded an empire there and became its king, a mighty king, mightier than any of the ten thousand—earls—up there! (*Sinks down upon the bench by the table.*)

Skule (*after looking at him for a moment*). Bishop Nicholas, are you something more or something less than human?

Bishop Nicholas (*with a smile*). I am in a state of innocence; I know no difference between good and evil.

Skule (*half to himself*). Why did they bring me into the world, if they had not a better fate in store for me? Haakon has so sure and immovable a faith in himself—all his men have so sure and immovable a faith in him—

Bishop Nicholas. Never let it be seen that you have not an equal faith in yourself! Speak as if you had it; swear positively that you have it—and every one will believe you.

Skule. If only I had a son! If I had a son to come after me in all the great inheritance!

Bishop Nicholas (*eagerly*). Yes, my lord? If you had a son—?

Skule. But I have none.

Bishop Nicholas. Haakon begets sons.

Skule (*wringing his hands*). And is of royal birth!

Bishop Nicholas (*getting up*). My lord—how if he were not?

Skule. You know that he has proved it—by the Ordeal of the Iron.

Bishop Nicholas. And how if he were not—in spite of the Ordeal?

Skule. Are you going to say that God, who protected Inga scatheless through the Ordeal, is lying?

Bishop Nicholas. On what point was it that Inga dared to demand the judgment of Heaven?

Skule. As to whether the child she bore, away in the east, in Borgasyssel, was the son of Haakon Sverreson.

Bishop Nicholas (*nods his head, looks round him and speaks in a low voice*). And what if King Haakon were not that child?

Skule (*recoiling*). Good God—! (*Collects himself.*) It is inconceivable.

Bishop Nicholas. Listen to me, my lord. I am seventy-six years old; I am slipping quickly down life's hill now, and I dare not take that secret with me where I am going—

Skule. Speak, speak! Is he not Haakon Sverreson's son?

Bishop Nicholas. Listen. It was known to no one that Inga was with child. Haakon Sverreson was but newly dead, and maybe she was afraid of Inge Baardson who was king then—and of you—and, I even believe, of the Baglers too. She gave birth to her child, alone, in the house of Trond the priest in Heggen, far in the east of Norway, and nine days later she went away home; but the King's child lived a whole year in the priest's house without her daring to come and see it, and without any one's knowing aught of the matter except Trond and his two sons.

Skule. Yes, yes—and then?

Bishop Nicholas. When the child was a year old it could not well be concealed any longer. Then Inga disclosed the secret to Erlend of Huseby—an old Birchleg who was of Sverre's day—you know whom I mean.

Skule. Well?

Bishop Nicholas. He and some other chieftains from the hills took the child, journeyed in mid-winter over the mountains with him, and brought him to the King, who then had his palace at Nidaros.

Skule. And, in spite of that, you can say—?

Bishop Nicholas. You can well understand how perilous a thing it was for a simple priest to have the

upbringing of a king's son. Therefore as soon as the boy was born he confessed the matter to one of his superiors in the Church and asked for his counsel. His superior bade him secretly change the child for another, send the true King's son away to a safe place, and give the changeling to Inga if either she or the Birchlegs should come to him and claim the royal child.

Skule (*in shocked tones*). And who was the cur who could give such advice?

Bishop Nicholas. It was I.

Skule. You? Ah yes, you have always hated Sverre's race.

Bishop Nicholas. I deemed it unsafe for the King's son to fall into your hands.

Skule. But the priest?

Bishop Nicholas. Promised to do as I bade him.

Skule (*gripping him by the arm*). And Haakon is the changeling?

Bishop Nicholas. If the priest kept his promise.

Skule. If he kept it?

Bishop Nicholas. Trond the priest left the country the same winter that the child was taken to King Inge. He made a pilgrimage to the grave of Thomas Becket, and remained in England till his death.

Skule. He left the country, you say! After such a deed, no doubt he feared the revenge of the Birchlegs.

Bishop Nicholas. Or else he did *not* do the deed, and feared *my* revenge.

Skule. Which do you believe to be true?

Bishop Nicholas. Either is equally likely.

Skule. But what of the priest's sons of whom you spoke?

Bishop Nicholas. They went with the Crusaders to the Holy Land.

Skule. And no one heard of them again?

Bishop Nicholas. Yes.

Skule. Where are they?

Bishop Nicholas. They were drowned, crossing the Greek seas.

Skule. And Inga—?

Bishop Nicholas. Knows nothing, either of the priest's confession or of what I counselled.

Skule. Her child was but nine days old when she went away, you said?

Bishop Nicholas. Yes; and the child she saw, the next time, was more than a year old—

Skule. So that there is no one in the world that can throw light on the matter. (*Walks up and down in an agitated manner.*) Good God, can it be the truth? Haakon—the King—who is lord of the whole kingdom—not the rightful heir to the throne! And yet why should it not be true enough? Has not good luck always pursued him in an amazing manner? Then why not this, too—to be taken in his infancy out of a poor peasant's cottage and laid in the royal child's cradle?

Bishop Nicholas. But all the people believe him to be the King's son—

Skule. He believes it *himself*, my lord. That is the best part of his good fortune; that is his girdle of strength! (*Goes to the window.*) Look how splendidly he sits his horse! No one has a seat like his. There is a happy gleam in his eyes, like sunshine; he looks out upon the world as if he knew he were destined to go forward, always forward. (*Turns to the* BISHOP.) I am a king's right arm—perhaps, even, a king's brain; but he is every inch a king.

Bishop Nicholas. And yet perhaps is no king.

Skule. No—perhaps not.

Bishop Nicholas (*laying his hand on* SKULE'S *shoulder*). My lord, listen to me—

Skule (*still gazing out of the window*). There sits the Queen. Haakon speaks softly to her, and she goes red and white with happiness. He took her for his wife because it was wise to choose the daughter of the most powerful man in the country. There was not a single thought of love for her in his heart then—but it will come; he is a favourite of fortune. She will be the light of his life—. (*Breaks off, and exclaims in amazement.*) What is that?

Bishop Nicholas. What?

Skule. Dagfinn is brushing his way impetuously through the crowd that is standing around. Now he is telling the King something.

Bishop Nicholas (*looking out over* SKULE'S *shoulder*). Haakon looks angry—does he not? He clenches his fists—

Skule. He looks up here—what can it mean? (*Turns to go.*)

Bishop Nicholas (*restraining him*). My lord, listen to me. There might be a means of finding out for certain as to Haakon's right to the crown.

Skule. A means, you say?

Bishop Nicholas. Trond, the priest, before his death wrote a letter setting out what he had done, and swore by the Holy Sacrament that what he had written was true.

Skule. And that letter? Tell me, for God's sake—where is it?

Bishop Nicholas. You must know, then, that—. (*Looks towards the door.*) Hush, the King is coming.

Skule. The letter—the letter!

Bishop Nicholas. Here is the K..g.

(HAAKON *comes in, followed by his men and a number of the guests.* MARGRETE *comes in directly afterwards; she appears greatly agitated, and is going to hurry forward to the* KING, *but is prevented by* RAGNHILD, *who has followed her with some of her women.* SIGRID *stands a little apart in the background.* SKULE'S *men seem uneasy, and gather together at the right side, where* SKULE *is standing, but a little farther back.*)

Haakon (*with an evident struggle to control himself*). Earl Skule, who is the King of this country?

Skule. Who is the King?

Haakon. That was my question. I bear the title of King, but who wields the kingly power?

Skule. It should be he who has the kingly right.

Haakon. So it should be; but is it so?

Skule. Are you calling me to judgment?

Haakon. I am. That right have I with every man in my kingdom.

Skule. I am not afraid to answer for my actions.

Haakon. It will be well for us all if that is so. (*Mounts one of the steps of the throne, and leans upon the arm of the throne.*) Here stand I, your king, and ask you whether you know that John, Earl of Orkney, is in revolt against me?

Skule. Yes.

Haakon. That he refuses to pay his tribute to me?

Skule. Yes.

Haakon. And is it true that you, my lord, sent a letter to him to-day?

Skule. Who says so?

Ivar Bodde. I say so.

Dagfinn. Jostein Tamb could not refuse to take it with him, as it bore the King's Seal.

Haakon. So you write to the King's enemies, and seal your letter with the King's Seal, though the King has no knowledge of what is written in the letter!

Skule. I have done so for many years with your consent.

Haakon. Yes, in the days when you were acting as my guardian.

Skule. Never have you suffered any harm therefrom. The Earl of Orkney wrote to me, begging for my intervention; he made proposals for an agreement between you and him, but upon terms dishonourable to you. The expedition to Vermeland has been weighing heavily upon your mind; if you had had to settle this matter, the Earl of Orkney would have been let off too easily. I can handle the matter better.

Haakon. We should have preferred to deal with the matter ourselves.—And what answer did you send him?

Skule. Read my letter.

Haakon. Give it to me.

Skule. I thought you had it?

Dagfinn. Surely you know better than that. Gregorius Jonsson was too quick for us. When we came on board, the letter was gone.

Skule (*turning to* GREGORIUS JONSSON). Give the letter to the King.

Gregorius Jonsson (*going near to* SKULE, *uneasily*). Listen to me—!

Skule. What is it?

Gregorius Jonsson (*in a low voice*). Remember that there was some plain speaking about the King in it.

Skule. I will take the responsibility for that. The letter!

Gregorius Jonsson. I have not got it.

Skule. You have not got it?

Gregorius Jonsson. Dagfinn was on our heels. I took the letter from Jostein Tamb, tied a stone in it—

Skule. Well?

Gregorius Jonsson. And it is lying at the bottom of the fjord.

Skule. That was ill done—ill done.

Haakon. I am waiting for the letter, my lord!

Skule. I cannot produce it.

Haakon. You *cannot?*

Skule (*going a step nearer to the* KING). I am too proud a man to have recourse to what you and your followers would say were subterfuges—

Haakon (*repressing his growing anger*). And so—?

Skule. To make an end of it—I do not produce the letter! I *will* not produce it!

Haakon. You defy me, then!

Skule. If there is nothing for it but that—then, yes, I defy you!

Ivar Bodde (*quickly*). Now, my liege, I think no man could require more proof!

Dagfinn. No, it seems to me we know the Earl's true disposition now.

Haakon (*to* SKULE, *coldly*). Give the Royal Seal to Ivar Bodde.

Margrete (*rushes, with folded hands, towards the daïs where* HAAKON *stands*). Haakon, be a kind and gracious husband to me! (HAAKON *waves her back with a commanding gesture. She hides her face in her veil and goes back to where her mother is standing.*)

Skule (*to* IVAR BODDE). Here is the Seal.

Ivar Bodde. This was to have been the last night of the wedding festivities. It has ended in heavy grief

for the King; but something of the kind was bound to happen some time, and I believe every true-hearted man must be glad that it has happened.

Skule. And *I* believe that every true-hearted man must be filled with wrath at a priest's meddling in this way in the affairs of us Birchlegs—yes, I say "us Birchlegs" because I am a Birchleg as much as the King or any of his men. I am of the same stock as he—the stock of Sverre, the royal stock. But you, priest, have built up a wall of mistrust round the King and kept me apart from him. That has been your task this many a year.

Paul Flida (*excitedly, to those standing round him*). Earl's men! Shall we bear it any longer?

Gregorius Jonsson (*advancing*). No, we neither can nor will bear it any longer. It is time to say this—no one of Earl Skule's men can serve the King with full trust and affection as long as Ivar Bodde is allowed to go in and out of the palace and make mischief for us.

Paul Flida. Priest, I will avenge myself on you, life and limb, wherever I meet you—in the open field, or on the sea, or under any unconsecrated roof!

Several of Skule's men. And we too! We too! We shall hold you outlawed!

Ivar Bodde. God forbid that I should stand between the King and so many mighty chieftains.—Haakon, my sovereign liege, I know in my own heart that I have served you with all fidelity. That I have been opposed to Earl Skule, is true; but if at any time I have done him wrong, may God forgive me for it. Now my task in the palace is done. Here is your Seal, my liege; take it into your own hands, where it should have been long since.

Haakon (*who has come down from the dais*). You must stay with me!

Ivar Bodde. I cannot. My conscience would for ever be pricking me if I did that. No man could do any greater wrong, at such a time as this, than to stand between the King and Earl Skule.

Haakon. Ivar Bodde, I command you to stay!

Ivar Bodde. If the sainted King Olaf himself rose up

from his tomb and bade me stay, I must go. (*Lays the Seal in* HAAKON'S *hand.*) Farewell, my noble master! God bless and help you in all your doings! (*Goes out through the crowd to the right.*)

Haakon (*gloomily, to* SKULE *and his men*). There have I lost a trusty friend, thanks to you. I shall not easily make good such a loss.

Skule. I offer you myself and all my men.

Haakon. Aye, but I fear it will need more than that. I need now to gather round me every man that I can fully trust. Dagfinn, send word at once northwards to Haalogaland and summon Vegard Væradal back to me.

Dagfinn (*who has been standing apart in conversation with a man in travelling dress who has come into the hall, comes forward and says tremblingly*): Vegard cannot come, my liege.

Haakon. Why do you say that?

Dagfinn. I have just had news of him.

Haakon. What news?

Dagfinn. Vegard Væradal is slain.

Several voices. Slain!

Haakon. Who slew him?

Dagfinn. Andres Skjaldarband, Earl Skule's friend. (*A short silence; men are whispering uneasily to one another.*)

Haakon. Where is the messenger?

Dagfinn (*bringing the man forward*). Here, my liege.

Haakon. What was the cause of his slaying?

The Messenger. That no one clearly knows. They were talking of the tribute from the Finns, when Andres sprang at him and gave him his death-blow.

Haakon. Had there been disputes between them before?

The Messenger. Yes, from time to time. Andres often told how a shrewd counsellor had written to him from the south that he should be as rock and flint towards Vegard Væradal.

Dagfinn. Strangely enough, before Vegard went north he told me how a shrewd counsellor had said

to him that *he* should be as rock and flint towards Andres Skjaldarband.

Bishop Nicholas (*spitting*). Fie upon such counsellors!

Haakon. We will seek no farther to know what lay at the root of this. Two trusty hearts have I lost to-day. I could weep for Vegard; but there is matter here for more than tears. A life must pay for a life. My lord Earl, Andres Skjaldarband is one of your household. I claim your help in compensation for the loss of Ivar Bodde. I take you at your word, and expect you to strain every nerve that punishment shall be dealt out for this outrage.

Skule. Of a truth, evil angels are working betwixt us two this day. On any other of my men, whoever it might be, I would have allowed you to avenge this slaying—

Haakon (*anxiously*). Well?

Skule. But not on Andres Skjaldarband.

Haakon (*hotly*). Do you mean to protect a murderer?

Skule. This murderer I *must* protect.

Haakon. And your reason—?

Skule. That no one shall know, save God above.

Bishop Nicholas (*softly, to* DAGFINN). I know.

Dagfinn. And I suspect.

Bishop Nicholas. Say nothing, good Dagfinn.

Haakon. Earl Skule, I want to believe, as long as I may, that you are not in earnest in what you have just said to me.

Skule. Were it my own father Andres Skjaldarband had slain, he should go free! You must ask me no more.

Haakon. So be it. Then we must set the matter right ourselves!

Skule (*in an undertone*). My liege, there will be bloody work on both sides!

Haakon. So be it, but the penalty shall be paid.

Skule. It must not! It cannot!

Bishop Nicholas. No, the Earl is right there.

Haakon. Do you say that, my lord bishop?

Bishop Nicholas. Andres Skjaldarband has gone to the Crusades.

Haakon. To the Crusades!

Bishop Nicholas. And is already far away from Norway.

Skule. That is fortunate for us all.

Haakon. The day is declining; the wedding festivities have drawn to their close. I thank you, my lord earl, for all the honours you have done to me during these days. You are bound for Nidaros, I believe?

Skule. That is my intention.

Haakon. And I to Viken.—If you, Margrete, would rather bide here in Bergen, do so.

Margrete. Where you go I will follow, until you forbid me.

Haakon. It is well. Come with me.

Sigrid. Now is my family scattered wide. (*Kneels to* HAAKON.) Grant me a boon, my liege.

Haakon. Rise, Sigrid; whatever you ask shall be granted.

Sigrid. I cannot follow the Earl to Nidaros. The nunnery at Rejn is about to be consecrated; write to the Archbishop, and contrive that I may be made its Abbess.

Skule. You, my sister?

Haakon. You wish to enter a nunnery!

Sigrid (*rising up*). Since that night of blood in Nidaros—my wedding night—when the Baglers came and slew my husband and many hundred others with him, while every corner of the town was in flames—since then it has seemed to me as though the blood and fire had blinded me and had shut out the world around me from my sight. But it gave me the power to catch glimpses of what no other eyes can see; and one thing I see now—a time of mighty terror in store for this land.

Skule (*vehemently*). She is sick! Pay no heed to her!

Sigrid. A heavy crop is ripening for the Reaper who reaps in darkness. There will be but one task for all the women in Norway—to kneel in convents and in churches, and pray night and day.

Haakon (*troubled*). Is it the spirit of prophecy, or sickness of soul, that speaks thus?

Sigrid. Farewell, brother. We shall meet once again.

Skule (*involuntarily*). When?

Sigrid (*gently*). When you grasp the crown; when danger is at its height—when you need me in your direst need! (*Goes out to the right with* MARGRETE, RAGNHILD *and the other women.*)

Haakon (*after a short pause, draws his sword and says with firm and quiet determination*): All of Earl Skule's men shall take an oath of fealty to me.

Skule (*impetuously*). Are you determined on it! (*In tones almost of supplication.*) King Haakon, do not demand it!

Haakon. None of the Earl's men shall leave Bergen till they have sworn fealty to the King. (*Goes out with his train. All follow them, except* BISHOP NICHOLAS *and* SKULE.)

Bishop Nicholas. He has dealt hardly with you to-day. (SKULE *is silent, and stands looking after* HAAKON. BISHOP NICHOLAS *raises his voice.*) And perhaps not of royal birth, after all.

Skule (*turning round suddenly in an access of violent emotion and gripping* BISHOP NICHOLAS *by the arm*). Trond the priest's letter? Where is it?

Bishop Nicholas. He sent it to me from England before he died—I do not know by whose hands—and I never received it.

Skule. But it might be found!

Bishop Nicholas. I feel sure of that.

Skule. And if you find it you will give it into my hands?

Bishop Nicholas. I promise that.

Skule. Will you swear it on your soul's salvation?

Bishop Nicholas. I swear it, on my soul's salvation.

Skule. Good. Till that day comes, I will work against Haakon wherever it may be done quietly and in secret. I must prevent his becoming more powerful than me before the struggle between us begins.

Bishop Nicholas. But suppose events prove that he is the rightful heir—what then?

Skule. Then I shall have to try and pray—pray that my heart may be humbled, so that I may serve him as my honoured lord to the utmost of my power.

Bishop Nicholas. And if he be not the rightful king?

Skule. Then he must give place to me! The kingly title, the kingly throne, courtiers and men-at-arms, treasure and ships, towns and castles—all shall be mine!

Bishop Nicholas. He will take refuge in Viken—

Skule. I will hunt him out of Viken!

Bishop Nicholas. He will establish himself in Nidaros.

Skule. I will storm Nidaros!

Bishop Nicholas. He will shut himself up in Saint Olaf's holy church—

Skule. I will violate the sanctuary!

Bishop Nicholas. He will fly for protection to the high altar and cling to Olaf's shrine—

Skule. I will drag him down from the altar, even if I have to drag down the holy shrine with him!

Bishop Nicholas. But he will still have the crown on his head, my lord!

Skule. I will strike off the crown with my sword!

Bishop Nicholas. But suppose it is too firmly fixed—?

Skule. Then—in God's name or in Satan's—I will strike off his head with it! (*Goes out to the right.*)

Bishop Nicholas (*looks after him, nods his head slowly, and says*): Yes—yes—I can like him in that mood!

(*The curtain falls.*)

ACT III

SCENE I

(SCENE.—*A room in the Bishop's Palace at Oslo.*[1] *The entrance door is on the right-hand side. In the background a small open doorway leads to the chapel, which is lit up. A curtained door in the left-hand wall leads to the* BISHOP'S *sleeping apartment. Further forward on the same side, a couch. Opposite to that, on the right, a writing-table with letters, papers, and a lit lamp. The room is empty when the curtain rises; the sound of chanting is heard from behind the curtains on the left. Presently* PAUL FLIDA *comes in from the right, in travelling dress; he stops on the threshold, pauses, looks round him and then knocks three times on the floor with his staff.* SIRA VILJAM *comes in from the left.*)

Sira Viljam (*eagerly, but in low tones*). Paul Flida! God be praised! Then the Earl is not far off.

Paul Flida. His ships are at Hovedö by this time. I came on ahead. How goes it with the Bishop?

Sira Viljam. He is receiving Extreme Unction at this moment.

Paul Flida. He is in great danger, then?

Sira Viljam. Master Sigard of Brabant said he could not live the night.

Paul Flida. Then I suppose he has summoned us too late.

Sira Viljam. No, no; he has his full senses still—and a little strength left, too; every moment he asks if the Earl is not coming soon.

Paul Flida. You still call him the Earl; do you not know that the King has given him the title of Duke?

Sira Viljam. Of course, of course; it was only old habit that made me say it. Hush—. (*He and* PAUL FLIDA *cross themselves and bow. From the* BISHOP'S *room come two choristers carrying candles, and, following them, two with censers; after them, priests bearing the chalice, the paten, a crucifix and a banner; behind these a procession of priests and monks; then*

[1] The ancient name of Christiania.

more choristers with censers and candles. The procession winds slowly into the chapel. The door is shut behind them.)

Paul Flida. So the poor old fellow is done with this world.

Sira Viljam. I may tell him, then, that Duke Skule is coming as fast as he can?

Paul Flida. He will come straight from the harbour up to the palace. Farewell! (*Goes out. Several priests,* PETER *amongst them, and some of the* BISHOP'S *servants, come in from the left, carrying coverlets, cushions and a big brazier.*)

Sira Viljam. What does this mean?

A Priest (*arranging the couch*). The Bishop wishes to lie out here.

Sira Viljam. But is it prudent?

The Priest. Master Sigard says we must humour him. Here he comes.

(BISHOP NICHOLAS *comes in, supported by* MASTER SIGARD *and a priest. He is dressed in his canonicals, but without staff or mitre.*

Bishop Nicholas. Light more lights! (*He is led to the couch beside the brazier, and, when he has sat down, is wrapped in the coverlets.*) Viljam! I have received absolution for all my sins! They took them all away together—and I feel as if a heavy burden had been taken off me.

Sira Viljam. The Duke has sent word to you, my lord; he is already this side of Hovedö.

Bishop Nicholas. That is good, very good. And I think the King will soon be here too. I have been a sinful wretch in my day, Viljam; I have trespassed grievously against the King. The priests in there said that all my sins would be forgiven; well, perhaps they will, but it is so easy for them to promise—it is not they I have trespassed against. No, no—it will be far safer to hear it from the King's own mouth. (*Exclaims impetuously.*) Lights, I say! It is so dark in here.

Sira Viljam. The lights are lit, my lord—

Master Sigard (*stopping him with a gesture and*

going near to the BISHOP). How do you feel, my lord?

Bishop Nicholas. So so—my hands and feet are cold.

Master Sigard (*half aloud, as he moves the brazier nearer*). Ah—that is the beginning of the end.

Bishop Nicholas (*anxiously to* VILJAM). I said that eight monks should sing and pray for me in the chapel to-night. Keep an eye on them; there are some lazy fellows among them. (SIRA VILJAM *points silently to the chapel, from which the sound of singing is heard during the following scene.*) So much still undone, and to have to leave it all! So much undone, Viljam!

Sira Viljam. My lord, turn your thoughts heavenwards.

Bishop Nicholas. I have plenty of time before me—till morning, Master Sigard thinks—

Sira Viljam. My lord, my lord!

Bishop Nicholas. Give me my mitre and staff! You are quite right to say I should turn my thoughts—. (*A priest brings his mitre and staff.*) So—set the mitre down there, it is too heavy for me. Give me my staff in my hand. There, now I am armed—a bishop! The Evil One dare not press me too hard now!

Sira Viljam. Do you wish for anything else?

Bishop Nicholas. No. Yes, tell me; Peter, Andres Skjaldarband's son—every one speaks well of him—

Sira Viljam. He truly has a blameless soul.

Bishop Nicholas. Peter, you shall attend on me until the King or the Duke comes. Leave me meantime, you others, but be at hand. (*All, except* PETER, *go out to the right. The* BISHOP *is silent for a while, then calls to* PETER.)

Peter. My lord?

Bishop Nicholas. Have you ever seen old men die?

Peter. No.

Bishop Nicholas. All of them are afraid of death; that I dare swear! On the table there lies a big letter with a seal on it; give it to me. (PETER *brings it to him.*) It is to your mother.

Peter. To my mother?

Bishop Nicholas. You must journey up to Haaloga-

land with it. I have written to her on a very weighty matter. News has come of your father.

Peter. He is fighting God's battles in the Holy Land. If he fall, he will fall on consecrated ground; for there every foot of ground is holy. I beg God's help for him in all my prayers.

Bishop Nicholas. Do you love Andres Skjaldarband?

Peter. He is an honourable man; but there is another man upon whose greatness my mother nourished me, as it were, and brought me up.

Bishop Nicholas (*eagerly and anxiously*). Do you mean Duke Skule?

Peter. Yes, the Duke—Skule Baardsson. My mother knew him in her young days. The Duke must surely be the greatest man in the land!

Bishop Nicholas. There is the letter; go northwards with it at once!—Are they still singing in there?

Peter. Yes, my lord.

Bishop Nicholas. Eight stout fellows with throats like trumpets—that ought surely to be some help, I should think?

Peter. My lord, my lord, let me pray too!

Bishop Nicholas. I have left too much undone, Peter. Life is too short;—besides, the King is sure to forgive me when he comes—. (*Breaks off, in pain.*)

Peter. Are you suffering, my lord?

Bishop Nicholas. I am not suffering; but there is a ringing in my ears; lights seem to be twinkling before my eyes.

Peter. What you hear are heavenly chimes ringing you home; the lights are altar lights that God's angels have lit for you.

Bishop Nicholas. Surely, surely. There can be no danger, if only they keep up their praying properly in there—. Farewell, start at once with the letter.

Peter. Shall I not first—?

Bishop Nicholas. No, go; I am not afraid to be left alone.

Peter. Then farewell till we meet again when the heavenly chimes have rung for me too. (*Goes out to the right.*)

Bishop Nicholas. The heavenly chimes! It is easy enough to talk about them when you have a pair of good solid legs to stand upon.—So much undone! But much will live after me, nevertheless.—I swore to the Duke, by my soul's salvation, that I would give him Trond the priest's letter if it came into my hands; it is lucky that I never received it. If he had certainty, he would either conquer or fall; one of the two would become the mightiest man that has ever lived in Norway. No, no—what I have not been able to attain to, no one else shall attain to. It is best left in uncertainty. As long as the Duke is burdened with *that*, the two of them will do one another harm whenever they can see opportunity; towns will be burnt, fields laid waste; neither of them will gain by the other's loss—. (*Breaks off, in terror.*) Mercy! Pity! It is I who am guilty—I, who from the very outset set the whole thing going! (*Controls himself.*) Yes, yes—but the King is coming now; he is the man who suffers most in the matter—and he will be sure to forgive me. I will have prayers and masses said, no fear of that. I am a bishop, too, and I have never slain any one with my own hand. How lucky that Trond's letter never came! The saints are working for me; they will not tempt me to break my oath.—Who is knocking at the door? It must be the Duke! (*Rubs his hands delightedly.*) He is coming to beg me for proofs of his right to the throne—and I have none to give him! (INGA *comes in, dressed in black cloak and hood.* BISHOP NICHOLAS *starts.*) Who is that?

Inga. A woman from Varteig in Borgasyssel, reverend sir.

Bishop Nicholas. The King's mother!

Inga. So they called me once.

Bishop Nicholas. Go, go! It was not I that advised Haakon to send you away!

Inga. Whatever the King does is right—that is not why I came.

Bishop Nicholas. Why, then?

Inga. My brother Gunnulf has returned home from England—

Bishop Nicholas. From England—!

Inga. He has been away many years, as you know, and has roamed far and wide. He has brought a letter home now—

Bishop Nicholas (*breathlessly*). A letter—?

Inga. From Trond the priest. It is for you, my lord. (*Hands it to him.*)

Bishop Nicholas. Ah, yes—and you have brought it to me?

Inga. That was Trond's wish. I owe him deep gratitude for the days when he cherished my little Haakon. I learnt that you were sick, and set on my way here at once; I have come here on foot.

Bishop Nicholas. There was no such great need for haste, Inga! (DAGFINN *comes in from the right.*)

Dagfinn. Peace be with you, reverend sir!

Bishop Nicholas. Is the King coming?

Dagfinn. He is riding over the hills hither, with the Queen and their child and a great following.

Inga (*rushing towards* DAGFINN). The King—the King! Is *he* coming hither?

Dagfinn. Inga! Are you here, poor sorely-tried woman?

Inga. It is no sore trial to have so great a son.

Dagfinn. Surely now his hard heart will melt.

Inga. Not a word of me to the King. Ah, but I must just see him! Tell me—is he coming here?

Dagfinn. Yes, directly.

Inga. And night has fallen. They will be lighting him with torches?

Dagfinn. Yes.

Inga. Then I will conceal myself in some doorway where he will pass—and then away home to Varteig again. But first I must go into Hallvard's church; lights are burning there to-night; there will I pray for a blessing on the King—on my beautiful son! (*Goes out to the right.*)

Dagfinn. I have performed my errand; I will go and meet the King.

Bishop Nicholas. Greet him most lovingly from me, good Dagfinn!

Dagfinn (*as he goes out*). I would not like to be Bishop Nicholas to-morrow!

Bishop Nicholas. Trond's confession—! So it has come, nevertheless—here it is in my hand. (*Stares in front of him, moodily.*) One ought never to swear anything on one's soul's salvation when one is as old as I am. Had I but time before me, I could always contrive to wriggle out of keeping such an oath; but to-night—my last night—no, it would not be prudent. But can I keep my oath? Will that not mean hazarding all that I have worked for all my life? (*Whispers.*) If only I could cheat the Evil One, just for this once! (*Listens.*) What is that? (*Calls.*) Viljam, Viljam! (SIRA VILJAM *comes in from the right.*) What is that dreadful whistling and howling?

Sira Viljam. It is a storm gathering.

Bishop Nicholas. A storm gathering!—[illegible] I keep my oath! A storm, you say—? Are they in there?

Sira Viljam. Yes, my lord.

Bishop Nicholas. Tell them to take great pains over it—brother Aslak especially; he always cuts his prayers so short; he will be robbing me of some of them, if he can—he skips bits, the lazy dog! (*Strikes his staff upon the floor.*) Go in and tell him it is the last night I shall live; tell him to take care what he is about, or I will come back and haunt him!

Sira Viljam. My lord, shall I not summon Master Sigard?

Bishop Nicholas. Go and do what I tell you! (VILJAM *goes into the chapel.*) It must indeed be the will of Heaven that I should reconcile the King and the Duke, since fate sends me Trond's letter now. It is a hard thing, Nicholas!—to have to destroy at one blow what you have spent your whole life in building up. But there is no help for it; this time I must do Heaven's will.—If only I could read what is in the letter! But I cannot see a word of it. There is a mist before my eyes, with sparks shooting through it—and I dare not let any one read it to me! To take such an oath as that—Is a man's cleverness so poor a thing that it

cannot see so far as the second and third degree of the results that follow from what he does? I spoke so much and so earnestly to Vegard Væradal about getting the King to send Inga away from him, that at last it came about. It was a clever thing to do, in itself; but, if I had not brought it about, Inga would not have been at Varteig now, the letter would not have come into my hands in time, and I should have had no oath to keep—so it was unwise as regards its ultimate result. If I had time before me—but only this one night left, and scarcely that much now! I *must*, I *will* live longer. (*Knocks with his staff. A priest comes in from the right.*) Call Master Sigard! (*The priest goes out.* BISHOP NICHOLAS *twists the letter about in his hands.*) Here, under this thin seal, lies Norway's saga for a hundred years!—lies dreaming, like a bird in the egg! Oh, if only I had more than one soul—or else none! (*Presses the letter wildly to his breast.*) Oh, if my end were not so near—and my judgment and punishment—I would hatch you out into a hawk whose wings should shadow the whole land with terror and whose sharp claws should be fixed in every man's heart! (*Collects himself.*) But my last hour is near. (*Shrieks.*) No, no—you shall be a swan, a white swan! (*Throws the letter away from him on to the floor and calls*): Master Sigard, Master Sigard!

Sigard (*coming in*). How goes it, reverend sir?

Bishop Nicholas. Master Sigard—sell me three days of life!

Sigard. I have told you—

Bishop Nicholas. Yes, yes; but you were not in earnest—it was to punish me. I have been an unreasonable master, and you wanted to frighten me. Fie, that was bad of you—no, no, it served me right! But now be good and kind to me! I will pay you well—three days of life, Master Sigard, only three days of life!

Sigard. Though I were to die at the same moment as you, I could not add three days to your life.

Bishop Nicholas. One day, then—only one day! Let me die in the daylight, in the sunshine! Listen, Sigard.

(*Signs to him to come nearer, and draws him down upon the couch.*) I have given well-nigh all my gold and silver to the Church, that many masses may be said for my soul. I will take it back—you shall have it all! What do you say, Sigard? Shall we two make fools of them all in there? He-he-he! You shall be rich, Sigard, and leave the country; I shall get a respite, and can cast about me a little and see how I can do with fewer prayers. Come, Sigard, shall we—? (SIGARD *feels his pulse.* BISHOP NICHOLAS *exclaims anxiously:*) Well, why do you not answer?

Sigard (*getting up*). I have not time, my lord. I must go and prepare you a drink which may ease your last moments a little.

Bishop Nicholas. No, let that wait! Wait—and answer me!

Sigard. I have not time; the drink must be ready within an hour. (*Goes out to the right.*)

Bishop Nicholas. Within an hour! (*Knocks wildly with his staff.*) Viljam! Viljam! (SIRA VILJAM *comes out of the chapel.*) Get some more of them to help you in there! Those eight are not enough!

Sira Viljam. My lord—?

Bishop Nicholas. Get more to help you, I say! Kolbejn the Crusader has lain sick these five weeks—he cannot have committed many sins in that time—

Sira Viljam. He was at Confession to-day.

Bishop Nicholas (*eagerly*). Yes, *he* must be good; take him! (VILJAM *goes into the chapel again.*) Within an hour! (*Wipes the sweat from his forehead.*) Pah, how hot it is here!—The wretched cur!—What is the use of all his learning if he cannot give me another hour? He sits in his room day after day, piecing together cunning wheels and weights and levers—trying to make a machine which shall go and go and never stop—*perpetuum mobile*, he calls it. Why does he not rather use his learning and his skill in discovering how to endow men with this *perpetuum mobile?* (*Stops and thinks; a light shines in his eyes.*) *Perpetuum mobile*—I am not strong in Latin, but that means something that has the power of being active for ever, throughout

all time. What if I myself could—? *That* would be a splendid finish to one's life! To do one's greatest deed in one's last hour! To set wheel and weight and lever at work in the King's soul and the Duke's—set them so to work that no power on earth could stop them; could I do that, I should indeed go on living—living in my work! And, after all, perhaps that is what is meant by immortality. Comforting, soothing thoughts!—how you give an old man strength! (*Draws a long breath, and stretches himself more comfortably upon the couch.*) The Devil has pressed me hard to-night. It is the consequence of lying idle. *Otium est pulvis—pulveris*—well, no matter for the Latin—the Devil shall never have power over me again. I will be busy to the last. I will—. How they bellow in there! (*Knocks.* VILJAM *comes.*) Tell them to be quiet. They disturb me. The King and the Duke are coming directly; I have weighty matters to think over.

Sira Viljam. Shall I then, my lord—?

Bishop Nicholas. Bid them cease for a while, so that I can think in peace. See, pick up that letter that lies on the floor. Good. And give me those papers—

Sira Viljam (*going to the writing-table*). Which, my lord?

Bishop Nicholas. It does not matter—those that bear a seal—those that are lying on the top. That is it; now go in and tell them to be quiet. (VILJAM *goes.*) To die, and yet still to rule Norway! To die, and yet so contrive that no one man shall succeed in raising his head above the others! There may be a thousand ways leading to that end, but there can only be one that will reach it; that way must I find—and that way must I take.—Ha! the way is close beside me, close to me! That is how it shall be. I will keep my oath; the Duke shall have the letter in his hands; but the King—ah, he shall have the sting of doubt in his heart. Haakon is a man of honour, as they call it; if he lose his faith in himself, and in his right, he will fall in other ways. Both of them shall doubt and believe—see-saw up and down, and never feel firm ground under their feet—

perpetuum mobile! But will Haakon put any faith in what I say? Aye, that he will; for I am a dying man. I shall cram him with truth to begin with.—My bodily strength is failing, but my soul is refreshed; I am no longer lying upon my sick-bed, but am sitting in my work-room, and mean to work all through my last night —work, till the light goes out—. (SKULE *comes in from the right and goes up to him.*)

Skule. Peace and greeting, my noble lord! I hear it goes ill with you.

Bishop Nicholas. I am a corpse in the bud, my good Duke; to-night I shall blossom; to-morrow you will be able to know what my perfume is like.

Skule. To-night, you say?

Bishop Nicholas. In an hour—so Master Sigard says.

Skule. And Trond's letter—?

Bishop Nicholas. Are you still thinking of that?

Skule. It never leaves my thoughts.

Bishop Nicholas. The King has made you a duke. No man in Norway has ever borne that title but you.

Skule. It is not enough. If Haakon is not the rightful king, I must have everything!

Bishop Nicholas. Ugh, it is cold in here! It chills my limbs through.

Skule. Trond's letter, my lord! For God's sake tell me—have you got it?

Bishop Nicholas. I know, at all events, where it can be found.

Skule. Then tell me, tell me!

Bishop Nicholas. Wait—

Skule. No, no—make use of your time; I can see that it is slipping away fast—and, besides, the King is coming here, they tell me.

Bishop Nicholas. Yes, the King is coming; and that should show you what a care I have for your interests, even now.

Skule. What do you mean to do?

Bishop Nicholas. Do you remember, at the King's wedding, you said that what gave Haakon his strength was his unshakeable faith in himself?

Skule. Well?

Bishop Nicholas. If I confess, and create doubt in his mind, his confidence will disappear—and his strength with it.

Skule. It is sinful, my lord, sinful—if he be the rightful king!

Bishop Nicholas. It will be in your power to give him his confidence back again. Before I go hence I will tell you where Trond's letter is to be found.

Sira Viljam (*coming in from the right*). The King is coming along the street, with his torch-bearers and his people.

Bishop Nicholas. He is welcome. (VILJAM *goes out.*) Duke, I beg a last service of you. See punishment done for me upon all my enemies. (*Takes up a letter.*) You will find their names here. Those whose names come first, I should like to have hanged, if it may be contrived.

Skule. Do not think about revenge now; you have but little time left—

Bishop Nicholas. Not about revenge, but about punishment. Promise me that you will brandish the sword of punishment over the heads of all my enemies, when I am gone. They are your foes just as much as mine. When you are King, you must chastise them—will you promise me that?

Skule. I promise and swear it. But Trond's letter—!

Bishop Nicholas. You shall know where it is; but—see—the King is coming; hide the list of our enemies! (SKULE *hides the paper; at the same moment* HAAKON *comes in from the right*). Welcome to the funeral, my liege!

Haakon. You have been a stubborn foe to me all along; but that shall be forgotten and forgiven now. Death cancels all scores, however heavy.

Bishop Nicholas. That is a burden off my soul! How great and wonderful is the King's mercy! My liege, what you have done for an old sinner this night shall be tenfold—

Haakon. So be it. But I feel bound to say that I am profoundly astonished. You summon me here to

ask for my forgiveness, and you arrange such a meeting as this for me!

Bishop Nicholas. A meeting, my liege?

Skule. It is to me the King refers. Will you, my lord bishop, assure King Haakon by my faith and honour that I had no knowledge of his coming until I landed at Oslo?

Bishop Nicholas. Alas, alas—the blame is all mine! I have been a sick, bedridden man all this last year; I have sought to know little or nothing of my country's affairs; I thought all went well between you two noble kinsmen now!

Haakon. I have observed that the friendship between Duke Skule and myself thrives best when we are apart. Therefore I bid you farewell, Bishop Nicholas, and may God be with you whither you are going. (*Turns to go.*)

Skule (*in a low, uneasy voice to the* BISHOP). My lord, my lord—he is going!

Bishop Nicholas (*suddenly and with wild emphasis*). Stay, King Haakon!

Haakon (*stopping*). What now?

Bishop Nicholas. You shall not leave this room till old Bishop Nicholas has spoken his last word!

Haakon (*involuntarily laying his hand upon his sword*). Maybe you have come well attended to Viken, Duke?

Skule. I have no part in this.

Bishop Nicholas. It is by force of words that I shall find a way to keep you. When there is a funeral in a house, the dead man is the most important personage there; he can do or not do what he pleases—so far as lies in his power. That is why I mean to speak my own funeral oration now; in days gone by I used always to fear that it would be King Sverre that would speak it—

Haakon. Do not talk so wildly, my lord!

Skule. You are wasting precious moments of your last hour!

Haakon. Your eyes are dimmed already!

Bishop Nicholas. Yes, my sight is dimmed; I can scarce see you where you stand; but in my mind's eye I can see my whole life passing clearly before me. I

can see sights there—listen and learn, my liege! I came of as powerful a race as any in the land. Its blood ran in the veins of many mighty chieftains, and I meant to be the mightiest of them all. I was little more than a boy when I began to thirst for great deeds; I felt as if I could scarcely wait till I were a man. Then there arose kings who had less right than I—Magnus Erlingsson, and Sverre the priest—and I determined to be king too; but I must become a chieftain first—it was impossible without. Then came the day of the fight at Ilevoldene; it was my first fight. The sun rose, and a thousand naked swords flashed like lightning. Magnus and all his men marched forward as if it were a sport they were going to; I alone felt something gripping me at the heart. Our troop went gallantly forward, but I could not follow them—I was afraid! All Magnus' other chieftains fought like men, and many fell where they fought; but I fled over the hills, and ran and ran, and never stopped till I came down to the fjord again, far away from the fight. There were many that needed to wash their bloody clothes in Trondhjem fjord that night; I needed to wash mine too—but not for the blood that was on them. Ay, my liege, I was afraid!—born to be a chieftain, and afraid! The knowledge seared my soul like a lightning flash. From that moment I felt I hated every man; I prayed secretly in churches, knelt weeping before the altar, made costly offerings, took solemn vows. I tried again; tested myself in battle after battle—at Saltösund—at Jonsvoldene, that summer the Baglers were at Bergen—but always in vain. It was Sverre who first noticed it, and spoke of it aloud and taunted me; and from that day every one laughed when they saw Nicholas Arnesson go forth in armour. Afraid! afraid!—and yet I wanted to be a chieftain, to be king—and, what is more, felt that I was born to be king, and could have furthered God's kingdom on earth; but it was Heaven itself that barred my way.

Haakon. Do not revile Heaven, my lord! You have shown much hatred!

Bishop Nicholas. Yes, I have shown much hatred;

I have hated every head in the land that o'ertopped the crowd. But the reason I hated was because I could not love. Fair women—oh, I could devour them with glistening eyes even now! I am eighty years old, and yet I feel the yearning to slay men and take women in my arms—but it was the same with that as with the fighting; I could only wish and desire—powerless to do more, from the day of my birth; tortured with riotous desire—and impotent to realise it! And so I became a priest; the man who wishes to be master of supreme power must be either a king or a priest. (*Laughs*). I a priest! I a churchman! Though, true enough, there was one ecclesiastical function for which Heaven had especially fitted me—to take the high notes—to sing with a woman's voice at the great church festivals. And yet the powers above demand of me, who am but half a man, what they have the right to demand of those who have been given powers that are equal to their work in life! There have been times when I have thought such a demand might be just; I have lain here on my sick-bed overpowered with fear of punishment and judgment; but now that is all over. My soul has some marrow in its bones once more! I have not been the offender; it is I that have suffered the wrong—I am the accuser!

Skule (*in a low voice*). My lord—the letter! Your time is growing short!

Haakon. Think of your soul and humble yourself!

Bishop Nicholas. A man's work is his soul, and my work will live after me here below. But you, King Haakon, should have a care for yourself; because just as Heaven has opposed me and has been worsted for its pains, so you are opposing the man who holds the country's fortunes in his hand—

Haakon. Ha!—Duke, Duke! Now I understand what this meeting means!

Skule (*angrily to* BISHOP NICHOLAS). Not a word more of that!

Bishop Nicholas (*to* HAAKON). He will oppose you as long as his head is upon his shoulders. Share your power with him! I shall know no peace in my tomb,

I shall come back and haunt you, if you two do not share! Neither of you shall add the other's height to his own stature; there would be a giant in the land if that were to happen, and there shall be no giant here—for I was no giant! (*Falls back upon the couch.*)

Skule (*kneeling by the couch and calling to* HAAKON). Call for help! Merciful God, he must not die yet!

Bishop Nicholas. How dark it begins to grow before my eyes! King Haakon—for the last time—will you share with the Duke?

Haakon. I will not part with the smallest shred of what God has given me!

Bishop Nicholas. So be it. (*Lowers his voice.*) You shall lose your confidence, at all events. (*Calls.*) Viljam!

Skule (*in a low voice*). The letter! The letter!

Bishop Nicholas (*without listening to him*). Viljam! (VILJAM *comes in;* BISHOP NICHOLAS *draws him close to him and whispers to him.*) When I received Extreme Unction, all my sins were forgiven me?

Sira Viljam. All your sins, from your birth till the moment you received the Unction.

Bishop Nicholas. Not afterwards? Not right up to my death?

Sira Viljam. My lord, you will not sin to-night.

Bishop Nicholas. Hm—you never can tell. Take the golden goblet Bishop Absolom left me—give it to the Church—and say seven more masses for me.

Sira Viljam. My lord, God will be merciful to you!

Bishop Nicholas. Seven more masses, I say—for my sins to-night! Go! go! (VILJAM *goes out;* BISHOP NICHOLAS *turns to* SKULE.) Duke, supposing you were to read Trond's letter, and it appeared from it that Haakon was the rightful King—what would you do then?

Skule. Before God—then he should be King!

Bishop Nicholas. Think well; much is involved in this. Search out every corner of your heart, and answer as if you were standing before your judge. What will you do if he is the rightful King?

Skule. Humble myself and serve him.

Bishop Nicholas (*mumbling*). Well, well; take the consequences, then. (*To* SKULE.) Duke, I am weak and weary; I feel a gentle spirit of forgiveness coming over me—

Skule. That is death! Trond's letter—where is it?

Bishop Nicholas. Something else first—I gave you a list of the names of my enemies—

Skule (*impatiently*). Yes, yes—I will revenge you fully on them—

Bishop Nicholas. No, I feel so gentle now; I will forgive those whose names are written there. Just as you renounce power, so I will renounce revenge. Burn the list.

Skule. Yes, yes—as you will.

Bishop Nicholas. Here, in this brazier, so that I can see it—

Skule (*throwing the paper into the flames*). There, you see it is burning! And now speak, speak! The lives of thousands depend on your speaking now!

Bishop Nicholas (*with a gleam in his eyes*). The lives of thousands! (*Screams.*) Light! Air!

Haakon (*rushes to the door and calls*). Help! The Bishop is dying! (SIRA VILJAM *and others of the* BISHOP'S *people come in.*)

Skule (*grasping the* BISHOP *by the arms*). The fortunes of Norway for a hundred years—her greatness for all eternity, maybe—!

Bishop Nicholas. For all eternity! (*In a triumphant voice.*) *Perpetuum mobile!*

Skule. By our souls' salvation—where is Trond's letter?

Bishop Nicholas (*calling*). Seven more masses, Viljam!

Skule (*beside himself with anxiety*). The letter! The letter!

Bishop Nicholas (*smiling in his death-struggles*). It was that you burned, my good duke. (*Falls back on the couch and dies.*)

Skule (*gives an involuntary scream, as he falls back and covers his face with his hands*). Almighty God!

The Monks (*rushing out of the chapel*). Save yourselves! Save yourselves!

Voices. All the powers of evil are loose to-night!

Other Voices. We heard wild laughter from one corner—and a cry, "We have him!" All the lights went out!

Haakon. Bishop Nicholas is just dead.

The Monks (*hastening out to the right*). *Pater noster—Pater noster.*

Haakon (*going up to* SKULE *and speaking in low tones*). My lord, I will not seek to know what secret schemes you were plotting with the Bishop before he died; but from to-morrow you must return your powers and dignities into my hands. I see plainly now that we two cannot go forward together.

Skule (*looking at him absently*). Go forward together—?

Haakon. To-morrow I hold a Council in the palace. Everything must be cleared up between us. (*Goes out.*)

Skule. The Bishop dead and the letter burnt! A life full of doubt and conflict and fear! Oh, if only I could pray!—No, I must act! I must take the step to-night! (*To* VILJAM.) Where did the King go?

Sira Viljam (*in terror*). Heaven help us—what do you want with him?

Skule. Do you suppose that I want to kill him to-night? (*Goes out to the right.*)

Sira Viljam (*looks after him, shaking his head, while the* BISHOP'S *servants carry his body out to the left*). The Bishop said "seven masses more"; I think it would be safest for us to say fourteen. (*Follows the others.*)

SCENE II.

(SCENE.—*A room in the Palace. The entrance door is at the back; in each of the side walls, smaller doors; in the foreground, on the right side, a window. A lighted lamp is hanging from the ceiling. Close to the door on the left is a couch, and farther back a cradle in which* HAAKON'S *child is sleeping.* MARGRETE *is kneeling beside the child.*)

Margrete (*singing, as she rocks the cradle*).

Roof and rafters fade and show
The starry vault of sky,
And little Haakon on the wings
Of dreams is wafted high.

There is a shining ladder set,
By angels' footsteps trod;
They take my little Haakon's hand
And lead him up to God.

God sets His baby angels
To guard thee, baby dear;
God bless thee, little Haakon,
Thy mother watches here.

(*A short pause. Then* SKULE *comes in from the back.*)

Margrete (*getting up with a glad cry and rushing to meet him*). Father!—Oh, how I have sighed and longed for this meeting!

Skule. God's peace be with you, Margrete! Where is the King?

Margrete. With Bishop Nicholas.

Skule. Hm!—then he will soon be here.

Margrete. And you will talk together and be reconciled, and be friends again as in the old days?

Skule. That will I, willingly.

Margrete. Haakon will be willing too; and I pray God every day that it may come to pass. But come here and see—. (*Takes his hand and leads him to the cradle.*)

Skule. Your child!

Margrete. Yes, that lovely child is mine—is it not wonderful? His name is Haakon, like the King's. Look at his eyes—no, you cannot see them, for he is sleeping now—but he has great big blue eyes: and he can laugh and stretch out his hands and catch at me—and he knows me already! (*Arranges the coverlet on the cradle carefully.*)

Skule. Haakon begets sons, as the Bishop prophesied.

Margrete. That little child is a thousand times dearer to me than all the kingdom—and so is he to Haakon too. I scarcely can believe in my happiness. The

cradle stands beside my bed, and every night, when I wake up, I look to see if it is still there—I feel, almost, as if it were all a dream—

Skule (*listens and goes to the window*). Is not that the King?

Margrete. Yes, he has gone up the other stairway. I will fetch him! (*Takes her father's hand and leads him jestingly to the cradle.*) Duke Skule, stand guard over the royal baby a while—for he is a royal baby, you know, although I never remember it! And if he wakes, make a low bow and greet him as a king should be greeted! Now I will fetch Haakon. Thank God, at last our home shall know happiness and peace! (*Goes out to the right.*)

Skule (*after a short and gloomy silence*). Haakon has a son. His name will live after him. If he dies, there is an heir to the throne who stands nearer to it than any other. Everything works for Haakon. It is possible he is not the rightful king; but his confidence in himself is as strong as ever it was. The Bishop wanted to shake his confidence; but death did not give him time, God did not permit it. God protects Haakon; he has a girdle of strength in that. Suppose I were to tell him now—suppose I swore to what the Bishop told me—what good would it do? No one would believe me—neither Haakon nor any one else. He would have believed the dying Bishop, and the doubt would have poisoned his soul; but it was not to be. Confidence is as immovably fixed in Haakon's soul as doubt is in mine; who is there in the world that can root it up? No one, no one. The Ordeal of the Iron has been endured, God has spoken; and for all that Haakon may not be the rightful king, while my life is running to waste. (*Sits down moodily at a table on the right.*) And suppose I were to win the kingdom now, would not doubt be lying just as heavily on my soul—torturing me, consuming me, wearing me away as a perpetual drip of water will wear away a stone?—Ay, but it is better to be seated upon the throne and have doubts of yourself than to stand below among the crowd and have doubts of the man that sits upon the throne.

This must be ended betwixt me and Haakon! Ended?—but how? (*Gets up.*) Almighty God, who hast so ordered my fate, on Thy head be what may follow! (*Strides up and down, and every now and then pauses in thought.*) It is a question of burning all your bridges except one, and winning victory or death upon that one—that was what the Bishop said at Bergen, at the King's wedding. It is now three years since then, and all that time I have been wasting and dividing my strength in trying to defend all the bridges. (*Resolutely.*) I must follow the Bishop's advice now!—now or never! We are both of us here at Oslo; my men are in greater numbers than Haakon's this time; then why not make use of the advantage?—it is so seldom on my side. (*Hesitates.*) But can I—to-night? At once? No, no—not to-night! Ha, ha! there I am again—stopping to reflect—vacillating! Haakon does not know what that is; he goes straight ahead, and that is why he conquers! (*Strides across the floor and stops suddenly by the cradle.*) The royal child! How fair his brow is! He is dreaming. (*Straightens the coverlet and looks earnestly at the child.*) A tiny creature like that may lead a man's soul. I have no son. (*Bends over the cradle.*) He is like Haakon. (*Steps back suddenly.*) The royal baby, the Queen called him. "Make a low bow, and greet him as a king should be greeted!" If Haakon dies before me, this child will be lifted on to the throne; and I—I shall stand down below and bow before him and greet him as king! (*With growing agitation.*) This child, Haakon's son, will sit on the seat to which I, perhaps, have a better right—and I shall serve him for a foot-stool in my old age, when my locks are white and my back bent, and see my life's task still undone—die without having been King! I have more men here than Haakon—a storm is raging to-night and the wind is blowing down the fjord—! What if I were to seize the royal child? I can count upon the Trönders. What could Haakon dare do, if his child were in my power? My men will follow me, fight for me and conquer. I will reward them royally if they do. I will

do it!—take the step—cross the gulf for the first time! Could I but see whether he has Sverre's eyes—or Haakon's—! He is sleeping; I cannot see his eyes. (*A pause.*) His sleep protects him. Sleep in peace, little heir to the throne! (*Goes over to the table.*) Haakon shall decide. I will speak with him once more. (MARGRETE *comes in with* HAAKON *from the room on the right.*)

Margrete. The Bishop dead! Oh, believe me, all dissension has died with him.

Haakon. Get to bed, Margrete; you must be weary after your journey.

Margrete. Yes, yes! (*To* SKULE.) Father, be gentle and reasonable—Haakon has promised to be that! Good-night to you both! (*Goes out to the left, followed by two of her women who carry in the cradle after her.*)

Skule. King Haakon, we must not part as enemies this time. That would mean evil of every kind—a reign of terror in the land.

Haakon. The land has been accustomed to that for many a generation; but you see that God is with me. Every enemy that stands in my way is laid low. The Baglers exist no more—nor the Skattungs, nor the Ribbungs; Earl John is slain, Carl Ingesson is dead, and Sigurd the Ribbung too. All the fine claims that were made at the National Council at Bergen have proved of no avail. What is there left now that could be the cause of a reign of terror?

Skule. I am afraid, Haakon, there is myself.

Haakon. When I became king, I gave you a third part of the kingdom—

Skule. And kept two thirds yourself!

Haakon. You were always thirsting for more, so I increased your share. Now you own half the kingdom.

Skule. I still lack ten districts on the coast.

Haakon. I made you a Duke—no man in Norway has been that before you!

Skule. But you are King! I can brook no king over me! I was not created to serve you; I must be the one to rule and govern!

Haakon (*looks at him for a moment, then says coldly*): I pray Heaven you may come to your senses, my lord. Good-night! (*Turns to go.*)

Skule (*barring his way*). You shall not escape me that way! Take care, or I shall renounce all allegiance to you. I cannot brook your being my overlord any longer; we two must share alike!

Haakon. You dare to say that to me?

Skule. I have come to Oslo with a larger following than you, Haakon Haakonsson.

Haakon. Perhaps your intention is—

Skule. Listen to me! Remember what Bishop Nicholas said! Let us share; give me ten more coast districts; let me hold my share as an independent kingdom, without tribute or tax to you. Norway has been shared as two kingdoms before now; we will hold loyally to one another—

Haakon. Duke, you must be sick at heart to ask such a thing.

Skule. Yes, I am sick at heart, and there is no cure for me any other way. We two must be equals; no one must be over me!

Haakon. Every treeless island in Norway is a stone in the building that Harald Fairhair and our sainted King Olaf erected. Shall I consent to pull to pieces what they put together? Never!

Skule. Well, then, let us bear the kingly power alternately; let us each rule three years in turn! You have ruled for a long time; my time has come now. Absent yourself from the country for three years; I will be King meanwhile. I will smooth your way for you against your coming home, govern and direct everything for the best; to be always on duty wastes a man's powers and dulls them. Haakon, listen to me—three years each! Let us wear the crown in turn!

Haakon. Do you think my crown will fit your head?

Skule. No crown is too great for me!

Haakon. One must have divine right and a divine vocation to wear a crown.

Skule. And are you so certain you have the divine right?

Haakon. I have God's judgment as to that.

Skule. Do not rely so confidently on that. If the Bishop had been able to speak—ah no, it would be in vain to tell you now, you would not believe me. Certainly you have powerful allies in the powers above; but I defy you in spite of them. You will not share the kingly power with me? Very well, then we must choose the only way out that is left. Haakon, let us two fight, man to man, with serious weapons, to the death!

Haakon. Are you in earnest, my lord?

Skule. I am pleading for my life's work and my soul's salvation.

Haakon. Then there is little hope for your soul's salvation.

Skule. You want to fight me? You shall! you shall!

Haakon. Blinded man! I cannot but pity you. You think it is a divine vocation that urges you to crave the throne; you cannot see that it is nothing but arrogance. What is it that allures you? The circlet of royalty—the robes of purple—the right to sit three steps raised above the floor? Pitiful, pitiful! If that were to be king, I would throw my royalty at your head, as I would throw a scrap of food to a beggar.

Skule. You have known me since I was a child, and yet you judge me so!

Haakon. You have all the best gifts a man's mind can have, shrewdness and courage. You are born to stand nearest to the King, but not to be King yourself.

Skule. That is what we are going to make trial of.

Haakon. Tell me of a single kingly deed you have done in all the years you ruled the country on my behalf! Were the Baglers or the Ribbungs ever more powerful than they were then? You were a man at the best of your powers, but the country was harried by insurgent bands; did you get the better of a single one of them? I was young and inexperienced when I took over the government of the country; and now there are neither Baglers nor Ribbungs left!

Skule. That is the last thing you should boast of, for in that lies your greatest danger. If the King is to

have power in his hands, one party must be opposed to another, their claims must be conflicting, each section of the country must be striving against the others. Every community, every family, must either stand in need of the King's help or be afraid of him. Remove all dissension, and you will find you have robbed yourself of power by that very act.

Haakon. And you want to be king—you, who can hold such an opinion as that? You might have made a useful chieftain in Erling Skakke's day; but times have changed since then, and you cannot perceive it. Can you not see that the kingdom of Norway, as Harald and Olaf established it, is like a church that has not yet been consecrated? The walls are raised on strong foundations, the vaulted roof is wide and lofty, the spire points upwards like a fir-tree in the forest; but there is no life in it, no throbbing heart, no pulsing blood in its veins—God's breath of life has not yet touched it, for it has not been consecrated. *I* mean to give my country consecration! Norway has been a kingdom; it shall be a *nation!* The Trönder heretofore has fought with the man of Viken, the man of Agde with the man of Hördaland, the Haalogalander with the man of Sogn; hereafter all shall be one, and all shall be conscious of it and know that they are one! That is the task God has laid upon my shoulders; that is the work that lies before Norway's king. That, my lord, is a work I think you had best let alone, for indeed you are not fitted for it!

Skule (*impressed by his words*). To unite—? Unite the Trönder and the man of Viken—all Norway—? (*Incredulously.*) It is impracticable. Never was such a thing heard of in Norway's saga.

Haakon. Impracticable for you, because you could do nothing but repeat what has been done before; but for me it is easy—as easy as for a falcon to pierce the clouds.

Skule (*uneasily*). To unite the whole of the people—awaken in them the consciousness that they are *one!* Whence did so strange a thought come to you? It is like ice and fire in my veins. (*Impetuously.*) The

Devil sent it you, Haakon; it shall never become a reality as long as I have strength to set my helmet on my head!

Haakon. It came to me from God, and I shall not let it go as long as I bear Saint Olaf's crown upon my brow!

Skule. Then Saint Olaf's crown must fall from there!

Haakon. And who will make it fall?

Skule. I, if no other will.

Haakon. To-morrow's Council, Skule, shall make you harmless.

Skule. Haakon, do not tempt Heaven! Do not drive me to the edge of a precipice!

Haakon (*pointing to the door*). Go, my lord; and let it be forgotten that we have spoken with sharp tongues to-night.

Skule (*looking at him fixedly*). We shall speak with sharper tongues at our next meeting. (*Goes out at the back.*)

Haakon (*after a short pause*). He threatens me!—no, no, it will not come to that. He must and shall submit and fall at my feet; I need that strong arm—that shrewd head. Wherever I find courage and shrewdness and strength among my people, I know that God has given them these powers to use in my service. It was in order that he should serve me that Duke Skule was dowered with all good gifts. To defy me is to defy Heaven; and it is my duty to punish every one that sets himself up against Heaven's will—for Heaven has done so much for me. (DAGFINN *comes in from the back.*)

Dagfinn. My liege, be on your guard to-night. The Duke certainly means mischief.

Haakon. What do you say?

Dagfinn. What he intends doing, I do not know; but something is brewing, sure enough.

Haakon. Can he be thinking of attacking us? Impossible, impossible!

Dagfinn. No, it is something else. His ships are lying with sails up; he means to hold a Council on board.

Haakon. You must be wrong—! Go, Dagfinn, and bring me certain news of him.

Dagfinn. I will; you may rely on me. (*Goes out.*)

Haakon. No—it is unthinkable! He dare not set himself up against me. God will not permit him—God, who has caused everything to happen so wonderfully for me hitherto. I must have peace now, for I must set about my great task!—I have done so little as yet; but I hear clearly within me the voice of Heaven: "Thou shalt do a great kingly work in Norway!"

Gregorius Jonsson (*coming in from the back*). My lord and king!

Haakon. Gregorius Jonsson! You here?

Gregorius Jonsson. I am come to offer myself as your servitor. Till to-day I have served the Duke; but now I dare serve him no longer.

Haakon. What has happened?

Gregorius Jonsson. What no man will believe when rumour spreads it abroad in the land.

Haakon. Speak, speak!

Gregorius Jonsson. I am afraid to hear the sound of my own words; know then that—(*grips* HAAKON *by the arm and whispers in his ear*).

Haakon (*falling back with a cry*). He has lost his senses!

Gregorius Jonsson. God grant you may be right.

Haakon. It is unheard of!—No, no, it cannot be true!

Gregorius Jonsson. By Christ's holy Blood, it is!

Haakon. Go! go! Let the trumpets sound the assembly. Collect all my men!

(GREGORIUS JONSSON *goes out.* HAAKON *walks up and down the room several times, then goes quickly up to the door of* MARGRETE'S *room, knocks, then turns away and takes a few steps up and down; then goes again to the door, knocks, and calls:* "MARGRETE!" *and begins walking up and down again.* MARGRETE *comes to the door, in her night-gown, and with her hair unbound; she has thrown a red cloak over her shoulders and holds it crossed over her bosom.*)

Margrete. Haakon! Is it you?

Haakon. Yes, yes; you must come in here.

Margrete. Then you must not look at me; I had just got into my bed.

Haakon. I have something else to think about now.

Margrete. What has happened?

Haakon. Give me good advice! Just now the worst of all possible news was brought to me.

Margrete (*anxiously*). What news, Haakon?

Haakon. That there are now two kings in Norway.

Margrete. Two kings in Norway!—Haakon, where is my father?

Haakon. He has proclaimed himself king on shipboard; he is sailing to Nidaros now to get himself crowned.

Margrete. Merciful God—! (*Sinks on to a seat, covers her face with her hands, and weeps.*)

Haakon. Two kings in the land.

Margrete. My husband the one—and my father the other!

Haakon (*walking up and down uneasily*). Give me good advice, Margrete! Shall I go over the hills and come to Trönde before him, and prevent his being crowned? No, it is impossible. I have too small a band of warriors with me; and up there in the north he has more influence than I.—Give me advice; how shall I get the Duke slain before he can come to Nidaros?

Margrete (*in beseeching tones, with folded hands*). Haakon, Haakon!

Haakon. Can you not hit upon any cunning device by which we may get the Duke slain, I say!

Margrete (*falling upon her knees*). Have you so completely forgotten that he is my father!

Haakon. Your father—; yes, yes, that is true; I had forgotten that. (*Raises her up.*) Sit, Margrete; be comforted; do not weep; you are in no way to blame for this. (*Crosses over to the window.*) Duke Skule will be worse to me than all my other foes!—God, God, why dost Thou strike at me so sorely—me, who have not sinned! (*A knocking is heard at the door at the back.*

He collects himself, listens and calls.) Who is it that knocks there, so late at night?

Inga (*from without*). One who is half dead with cold, Haakon!

Haakon (*with a cry*). My mother!

Margrete (*springing up*). Inga!

(HAAKON *hurries to the door and opens it;* INGA *is seen sitting on the threshold.*)

Haakon. My mother—waiting like a dog outside her son's door! And I ask why God has struck at me!

Inga (*stretching out her arms to him*). Haakon, my child! God bless you!

Haakon (*lifting her up*). Come—come in, there is light and warmth here.

Inga. May I come in?

Haakon. We shall never separate again.

Inga. My son—my king—how good and kind you are! I stood in a corner of the street and saw you as you came from the Bishop's palace. You looked so sorrowful, I could not part from you like that!

Haakon. God be thanked for that. None could come that would be more welcome to me now! Margrete—mother—I have sinned greatly; I have locked up my heart against you two who are so rich in affection.

Margrete (*throwing herself on his neck*). Oh, Haakon, my beloved husband, have I a place in your heart at last?

Haakon. You have indeed; not to give me shrewd counsel, but to bring light and brightness into my life. Come now what may, I feel God's strength within me! (DAGFINN *enters hurriedly from the back.*)

Dagfinn. My liege, my liege! The worst has happened!

Haakon (*with a confident smile, as he draws* MARGRETE *and* INGA *close to him*). I know it; but there is no need for fear, my good Dagfinn! Even if there are two kings in Norway, there is only one in heaven—and He will make all things straight!

(*The curtain falls.*)

ACT IV

SCENE I

(SCENE.—*The great hall in the palace at Oslo.* KING SKULE *is feasting with his followers and chieftains. In the foreground, on the left, is a throne on which* SKULE *is sitting, richly apparelled in purple robes and wearing a crown. A table, at which the guests are seated, stretches from the throne to the back of the hall. Facing* SKULE *are* PAUL FLIDA *and* BAARD BRATTE. *Some guests of lower rank are standing on the right-hand side. It is late in the evening, and the hall is brilliantly lit. The banquet is drawing to an end; the company are in high spirits and partly drunk. They are toasting one another, and all laughing and talking at once.*)

Paul Flida (*rising and demanding silence*). Silence in the hall! Jatgeir the bard will chant his lay in honour of King Skule.

Jatgeir (*standing out in the middle of the floor*).

Duke Skule summoned the Örething
  While monks at Nidaros mass were singing;
He was hailed as King, while swords were clashed
  On the steel of shields, and the bells were ringing.

King Skule strode over Dovreskard
  With a thousand doughty men on ski;
The Gudbrandsdalers cried for fear,
  And with gifts of silver won them free.

Southward to Mjösen King Skule turned,
  The upland-dwellers snarled and swore;
Through Raumarike and Nannestad
  To Laaka the King his standards bore.

'Twas Holy Week when the Birchlegs came,
  Earl Knut at their head, against our men;
Swords leaped and spoke with certain voice,
  And gave the people's judgment then.

And this is sure: since Sverre's day
Never was there so fierce a fight;
All blood-flecked, like a warrior's coat,
The ground was stained on its garb of white.

They took to their heels, the Birchlegs did,
Casting away both axe and shield;
But many a hundred could not run,
For stark they lay upon the field.

Where is King Haakon? No one knows!
Castles and towns King Skule's hand
Has firmly grasped. All hail, our King!
Long may you rule our motherland!

Skule's Men (*springing up amidst a din of acclamation, brandishing goblets and beakers, and clashing their swords*). All hail, our King! Long may you rule our motherland!

Skule. I thank you for your lay, Jatgeir. It was just as I would have it, for it sings my men's praises equally with my own.

Jatgeir. To praise a king's men is to honour a king.

Skule. Take this armlet in payment for your lay, and stay with me and give me your help. I would have many bards about me.

Jatgeir. You will need them, my liege, if lays are to be sung of all your great deeds.

Skule. I mean to be three times more generous than Haakon; a bard's work shall be honoured and rewarded as highly as any other, as long as I am King. Be seated; you are one of my household now. All that you need shall be freely given you.

Jatgeir (*seating himself*). What I most need, your majesty will soon be in sad lack of.

Skule. What is that?

Jatgeir. King's enemies, whose flight and fall I may make my lays upon.

Many voices. Well spoken, Icelander!

Paul Flida (*to* JATGEIR). The lay was a good one; but, you know, every bard's lay has some little untruth in it, and so it was with yours.

Jatgeir. Untruth, my lord?

Paul Flida. Yes. You said that no one knows whither King Haakon has gone. That is not so. We have certain news that Haakon is at Nidaros.

Skule (*with a smile*). Yes, he has had homage paid to his child, and has named him as his successor.

Jatgeir. That I had heard; but I did not know that any man could give away what he did not himself possess.

Skule. It is easiest to give away what you have not got.

Bratte. It must have been no easy task to journey in midwinter from Bergen to Nidaros, begging his way.

Jatgeir. The Birchlegs' fortunes go round in a circle. They began in hunger and cold, and now they are ending in the same way.

Paul Flida. The rumour goes in Bergen that Haakon has forsaken the Church and all that is holy; he did not attend Mass on New Year's Day.

Bratte. He had a lawful excuse, Paul. He was busy all day breaking up his vessels and dishes of silver; else would he have had nothing to pay his followers with. (*Laughter and a noise of voices among the guests.*)

Skule (*lifting his cup*). I drink to you, Bratte, and thank you and all my new followers. You fought like men for me at Laaka, and a great share in the victory is yours.

Bratte. It was the first time I had fought under you, my liege; but I soon saw that it would be easy to be victorious when such a chieftain as you rode at the head of your men. But it was a pity that we slew so many and harried them so pitilessly; for now I fear it will be many a day before they venture against us again.

Skule. Wait till the spring comes; then we shall have the chance of meeting them again. Earl Knut is in the mountains at Tunsberg with those that escaped, and Arnbjörn Jonsson is rallying the folk in the east of Viken; when they think they are strong enough in numbers, they will be sure to let us hear from them.

Bratte. They will not dare, after the slaughter at Laaka.

Skule. Then we will lure them out by cunning.

Many Voices. Yes, yes—let us do that!

Bratte. You are skilled in cunning, King Skule. Your foes never know anything of your approach till you are upon them, and you are always where they would least expect you to be.

Paul Flida. That is why the Birchlegs call us "Wily Skins."

Skule. Others say "Wolfskins";[1] but this I swear, that, when next we meet, the Birchlegs shall learn how hard it is to skin such wolves.

Bratte. We shall not meet if they can help it—it will be a question of chasing them all over the country.

Skule. That is what it shall be. First of all we will sweep Viken clean, and bring all these eastern lands into subjection; then we will collect our ships, sail round the headland and then up to Nidaros.

Bratte. And when you are come thus to Nidaros, I do not think the monks will refuse to bring Saint Olaf's shrine out into the Council Field, as they did in the autumn when you were receiving our oaths of allegiance.

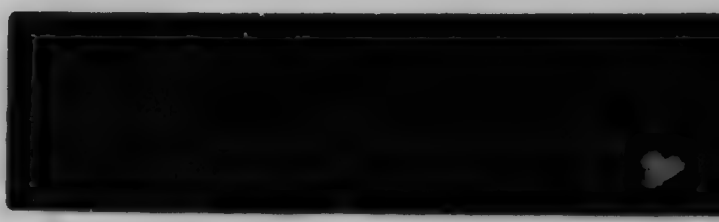
Skule. The shrine *shall* be brought out. I will have my kingly title lawfully confirmed in every way.

Jatgeir. And I promise you that I will chant a splendid lay in your honour, when you have slain the Sleeping Man! (*Laughter among the men.*)

Skule. The Sleeping Man?

Jatgeir. Do you not know, my liege, that they call King Haakon "Haakon the Sleeper," because he has

[1] It is impossible in translation to reproduce Ibsen's play on words in the use of the two terms *Varbælger* and *Vargbælger*, as the nicknames by which Skule's faction were known. The second half of the word in each case means a "covering" or "skin"; *var* (akin to our "ware" in such words as "beware" and "wary") means "caution" or "craft"; *varg* means "wolf." Thus "Waryskins" (or "Wily-skins") and "Wolfskins" seem the nearest equivalents, though of course they do not reproduce the pun. The nickname of "Wolfskins" for a political faction was a very old one in Norway, appearing as far back as the time of Harald Fairhair. Apparently it was revived in connection with Skule's party.



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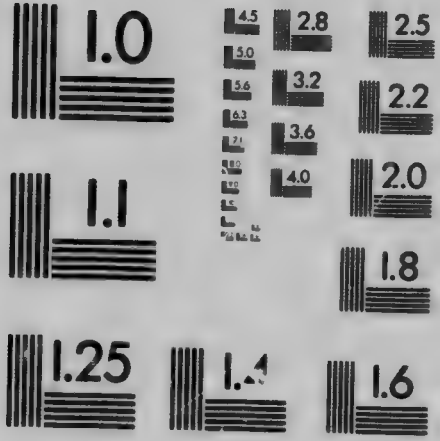

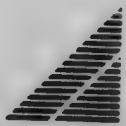

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seemed to sit like a man in a dream since you assumed the kingly power.

Skule. Let him dream. He will never dream himself into the kingship.

Jatgeir. Send him to a long and dreamless sleep, and then I shall have matter for a lay.

Skule's Men. Yes, yes, do as the bard says!

Skule. When so many good men give the same counsel, that counsel must be good. However, we will not speak of that matter now. But one promise I will make: every one of my men shall be free to take for his own the weapons, garments, gold or silver that he may wrest from an enemy that he has slain, and every man shall succeed to the dignities that were held by him that he has laid low. He that slays a man that owns lands shall inherit those lands himself; he that slays the governor of a province shall be given that province to govern; and all those that hold any such dignities or offices already shall be rewarded royally in some other way.

All the Men (*springing to their feet with shouts of delight*). Hail, King Skule! Lead us against the Birchlegs!

Bratte. Now you are certain of victory in every fight!

Paul Flida. I will have Dagfinn for my share; he has a goodly sword that I long have coveted.

Bratte. I will have the bard Torsteinsson's coat of mail; it saved his life at Laaka, for it withstood both blow and thrust.

Jatgeir. No, let me have that; it will fit me better; you shall have five gold pieces in exchange for it.

Bratte. Where will you get five gold pieces from, bard?

Jatgeir. I will take them from Gregorius Jonsson when we get north.

The Men (*all talking at once*). And I will have— I will have— (*The words become indistinguishable in a babel of talk.*)

Paul Flida. Away with you—each one to his quarters. Remember that you are in the King's hall.

The Men. Yes, yes—long live King Skule!

Skule. To your beds now, my good fellows! We have sat late drinking to-night.

One of the Men (*while the crowd begins to disperse*). To-morrow we will draw lots for the Birchlegs' goods.

Another. No, let us leave it to chance!

Others No, no!

Others. Yes, yes!

Bratte. Now the Wolfskins are fighting for the hear's skin.

Paul Flida. Before they have killed the bear!

(*All go out from the back of the hall.* SKULE *waits till the hall is empty; then the tension in his face relaxes, and he sinks down on to one of the seats.*)

Skule. How weary I am—weary to death! To have to stand, day in and day out, amidst this rabble—always with a smile on my lips, as if I were immovably certain of my right and of victory and good fortune! Not to have one man to whom I can speak of what tortures me so horribly! (*Gets up with a look of terror on his face.*) That fight at Laaka, too—and I the victor there! Haakon sent his men against me; it was God's part to be the arbiter between the two kings—and I conquered, conquered as no one before has ever conquered the Birchlegs! There were their shields, fixed in the snow, but there was no one behind them; the Birchlegs fled to the woods, over the moors and the heaths and the hills, as far as their legs would carry them. The unbelievable thing happened; Haakon lost, and I won. The victory carries with it a secret terror. Great God in heaven, hast Thou appointed no fixed law to which everything must conform? Does the fact of possessing the right not carry with it the might to conquer? (*With a wild outburst.*) I am sick, I am sick!—Why should not right be on my side? Does it not seem as though God Himself wished to assure me of that, since He has allowed me to be victorious? (*More thoughtfully.*) The possibilities are equally weighed—not a feather's weight more on one side than on the other—and yet—(*shakes his head*)—the scale turns in Haakon's favour. I have hatred and burning desire to cast into my side of the

scales, and yet it dips in Haakon's favour. When thoughts of the right to the throne come upon me unawares, it is always he, and not I, that I think of as the true king. If I want to picture myself as the rightful king, I am obliged to persuade myself—to build up an ingenious structure in my mind, using all my subtlety; I have to chase my memories from my mind, and force confidence upon myself. It never used to be so. What has happened, then, to make me so full of doubts lately? Was it the Bishop's having burnt the letter? No—that only made the uncertainty perpetual; it did not increase it. Has Haakon done any great kingly deed of late? No—he did his greatest deed at the time when I believed in him least. (*Sits.*) What is it, then? It is strange—it appears and disappears like a will-o'-the-wisp—it is on the tip of my tongue, like a word that one has lost and cannot recover. (*Springs up.*) Ah! now I have it! No—! Yes, yes, now I have it!—"Norway has been a kingdom; it shall be a nation. All shall be one, and all shall be conscious of it and know that they are one!" Ever since Haakon spoke these mad words, he has stood before my eyes as the rightful king. (*Looks anxiously around him and whispers.*) How if those strange words reflected the voice of God?—if God had had this in His mind heretofore, and now purposed to strew it abroad—and had chosen Haakon as His sower? (PAUL FLIDA *comes in from the back.*)

Paul Flida. My liege, I have news to report.

Skule. News?

Paul Flida. A man that has come up from the fjord tells me that the Birchlegs at Tunsberg have embarked in their ships, and that a number of men have assembled in the town during these last days.

Skule. Good. We will attack them—to-morrow, or next day.

Paul Flida. My liege, it may be that the Birchlegs intend to attack us first.

Skule. They have not enough ships for that—or enough men, either.

Paul Flida. But Arnbjörn Jonsson is collecting both men and ships round about Viken.

Skule. So much the better; we will crush them all together, as we did at Laaka.

Paul Flida. My liege, it will not be so easy to beat the Birchlegs twice running.

Skule. Why not?

Paul Flida. Because you cannot find in Norway's saga that such a thing has ever happened before. Shall I not send out scouts to Hovedö?

Skule. There is no need; it is a dark night, and foggy too.

Paul Flida. Your Majesty knows best, no doubt. But bear in mind, my liege, that every one is against you here in Viken. The townspeople of Oslo hate you; and, if the Birchlegs come, they will cast in their lot with them.

Skule (*with animation*). Paul Flida, can you not imagine it possible that I should win over the men of Viken to my side?

Paul Flida (*looking at him in amazement and shaking his head*). No, my liege, it is inconceivable.

Skule. And why?

Paul Flida. Well, of course, because you have the Trönders on your side.

Skule. I mean to have both the Trönders and the men of Viken on my side!

Paul Flida. No, my liege, that is impossible.

Skule. Inconceivable?—impossible? Why? Why should I not?

Paul Flida. Because the man of Viken is a man of Viken, and the Trönder is a Trönder; and because their sagas tell of nothing different, and because it always has been so.

Skule. Yes, yes—you are right. Go.

Faul Plida. And shall I send out no scouts?

Skule. Wait till daybreak. (PAUL FLIDA *goes out.*) Norway's saga tells of no such thing; it has never happened before. Paul Flida answers me as I answered Haakon. Maybe there are degrees above me as well as below. Perhaps Haakon is just so much my superior as I am Paul Flida's? Can it be that Haakon can discern unborn thoughts that I cannot? Who else is comparable to Harald the Fairhaired, who, at a time

when there was a king on every headland down the coast, said: "Their time has come, hereafter there shall be only one king." He threw the old saga to the winds, and created a new one. (*A pause; he walks up and down, deep in thought; then stops.*) Can a man take a divine vocation from another, as he might take weapons or gold from a fallen foe? Can an heir to the throne take upon himself to do kingly deeds, just as he would take the royal robe and cast it about his shoulders? Can the oak-tree, which has been cut down to make ships' timbers, say: "I will be the ship's mast; I will do what the fir does—point my gleaming length up to heaven, bear a gilded vane on my summit, advance with white bellying sail through the sunshine, and be seen by men's eyes far, far off"?—No, no, thou heavy, rugged oak, thy place is under the keel; there shalt thou lie and be of service—silently, and unseen by the eyes of those up in the daylight; it is thou that shalt keep the ship from overturning in the storm; the mast, with its gilded vane and its bellying sail, shall lead the ship forward towards new scenes, towards the unknown, towards strange shores and a saga in the making! (*Violently.*) Ever since Haakon spoke out his great kingly thought, I can think of nothing else in the world but that alone. If I cannot make it mine and bring it to a reality, I can see no other thought worth fighting for. (*Thoughtfully.*) Can I not do it? If not, why am I so enamoured of this thought of Haakon's? (JATGEIR *comes in from the background.*)

Jatgeir. Forgive me, my liege, for coming—

Skule. I am glad you have come, bard!

Jatgeir. I heard the townspeople at the inn talking so mysteriously—

Skule. Let that wait. Tell me, Jatgeir—you, who have travelled widely in foreign lands, have you ever seen a woman love a strange child?—not merely be fond of it, I do not mean that; but love it with all the passion of her heart?

Jatgeir. Only women who have no children of their own to love, do that.

Skule. Only they—?

Jatgeir. And barren women most of all.

Skule. Barren women most of all—? Will a barren woman love another's child with all the passion of her heart?

Jatgeir. It is often so.

Skule. And does it not sometimes happen, too, that a barren woman will kill another's child because she has none herself?

Jatgeir. Oh yes; but she is foolish to do that.

Skule. Foolish?

Jatgeir. Yes—because she gives, to the one whose child she slays, the gift of sorrow.

Skule. Do you think the gift of sorrow such a good thing, then?

Jatgeir. Yes, my liege.

Skule (*looking searchingly at him*). There seem to be two different men in you, old Icelander. When you are sitting amongst my men in merry company, you cloak and conceal your real thoughts; and, when one is alone with you, then there are moments when you seem to be one of those from amongst whom one would gladly choose one's friend. How is that?

Jatgeir. When you go swimming in the stream, my liege, you do not unclothe yourself in a spot where all the congregation going to church must pass by; you look for a sequestered place.

Skule. Naturally.

Jatgeir. My soul is bashful; that is why I do not unclothe it when there are a crowd in the hall.

Skule. Hm! (*A short pause.*) Tell me, Jatgeir, how did you become a bard? From whom did you learn your minstrelsy?

Jatgeir. One cannot be taught to be a bard, my liege.

Skule. No? Whence did the gift come, then?

Jatgeir. I received the gift of sorrow, and that made a bard of me.

Skule. So it is the gift of sorrow that bards need?

Jatgeir. I needed sorrow; there may be others that need faith, or happiness—or doubt—

Skule. Doubt, too?

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Jatgeir. Yes; but the doubter must be strong and sound.

Skule. Who would you call the unsound doubter?

Jatgeir. The man that is doubtful of his own doubt.

Skule (*slowly*). That, I think, would mean death.

Jatgeir. Worse; it means twilight—neither dark nor light.

Skule (*resolutely, as if shaking off his thoughts*). Where are my weapons? I want to fight and act—not to think. What was it you wanted to tell me when you came in?

Jatgeir. I wanted to tell you what I noticed at the inn. The townspeople are talking together mysteriously—laughing scornfully, and asking if we are so certain that King Haakon is away in the west; there is something they are very pleased about.

Skule. They are men of Viken, and the men of Viken are against me.

Jatgeir. They taunt us with the fact that you could not get King Olaf's holy shrine moved out into the Council Field when we swore homage to you; they say it is a bad omen.

Skule. The next time I go to Nidaros the shrine *shall* be brought out; it shall stand under the open sky, if I have to lay Saint Olaf's Church in ruins and widen out the Council Meadow to cover over the ground it stood on!

Jatgeir. That would be a mighty deed; but I would invent a lay about it as mighty as the deed itself.

Skule. Have you many unchanted lays in your mind, Jatgeir?

Jatgeir. No, but many unborn; they are conceived one after another, come to life, and so are born.

Skule. And suppose that I, who am King and have the power to do it, were to have you slain, would then every one of your unborn thoughts die with you?

Jatgeir. My liege, it is a great sin to kill a beautiful thought.

Skule. I am not asking you whether it is a sin, but whether such a thing be possible.

Jatgeir. I do not know.

Skule. Has it never happened to you that some friend of yours, also a bard, has described to you some great and noble lay that he has been minded to chant?

Jatgeir. Yes, my liege.

Skule. Have you not wished, then, that you could kill him so as to steal his idea and make the lay yourself?

Jatgeir. My liege, I am not barren; I have children of my own brain, and have no need to love those of others. (*Goes out.*)

Skule (*after a pause*). This Icelander is indeed a bard. He speaks God's deepest truths without knowing it. I am like a barren woman; and that is why I love this kingly thought that was born in Haakon's mind, love it with all the passion in my heart. If only I could adopt it as my own child! But it would die in my hands. Which is best—that it should die in my hands, or grow to great things in his? Would my soul have peace if that happened? Can I renounce all my ambitions? Can I look on while Haakon lays up future glory for himself?— How dead and empty all seems within me, and around me too. Not a friend—ah, the Icelander! (*Goes to the door and calls.*) Has the bard left the palace?

A Servant (*from without*). No, my liege, he is in the courtyard, talking to the guards.

Skule. Bid him come in. (*Goes over to the table. Soon afterwards* JATGEIR *re-enters.*) I cannot sleep, Jatgeir. It is all my great kingly thoughts that keep me awake.

Jatgeir. It is with a king's thoughts as with a bard's, I can see. They soar highest and grow mightiest in the stillness of the night.

Skule. Is that so with bards too?

Jatgeir. Yes, my liege. There is never a lay born by daylight; a man may write it down in the sunshine, but the poetry is born in the still hours of the night.

Skule. Who gave you the gift of sorrow, Jatgeir?

Jatgeir. She whom I loved.

Skule. She died, then?

Jatgeir. No, she deceived me.

Skule. And that is how you became a bard?

Jatgeir. Yes, that is how I became a bard.

Skule (*grasping him by the arm*). What gift do I lack to become a king?

Jatgeir. Not the gift of doubt; if so, you would not ask such questions.

Skule. What gift do I lack?

Jatgeir. My liege, you *are* King already.

Skule. Are you always so certain that you are a bard?

Jatgeir (*looks at him in silence for a moment, and then asks*): Have you never loved?

Skule. Yes, once—wildly, gloriously, and guiltily.

Jatgeir. You have a wife.

Skule. I took her to bear sons to me.

Jatgeir. But you have a daughter, my liege—a sweet and noble daughter.

Skule. If my daughter were a son, I would not ask you what gift I lacked. (*Impetuously.*) I must have some one about me that will obey me without having a will of his own—that will believe unfalteringly in me, that will cleave utterly to me in good fortune and bad, that will only live to shed light and warmth upon my life, that will die if I fall. Give me your counsel, bard Jatgeir!

Jatgeir. Buy yourself a dog, my liege.

Skule. Would not a man be capable of it?

Jatgeir. You would have to search far for such a man.

Skule (*suddenly*). Will you be that to me, Jatgeir? Will you be a son to be? You shall inherit the crown of Norway—you shall have the whole kingdom, if you will be a son to me, live for my life's work and believe in me!

Jatgeir. And what certainty could I give that I should not be deceiving you—?

Skule. Renounce your vocation; make no more poems, and then I will believe in you!

Jatgeir. No, my liege—that would be to buy the crown too dear.

Skule. But think!—it is a greater thing to be a king than to be a bard!

Jatgeir. Not always.

Skule. It is only your unmade lays that you will sacrifice!

Jatgeir. The unmade lays are always the fairest.

Skule. But I *must*—I *must* have one man that can believe in me! Only one! I know that if I had that I should be saved!

Jatgeir. Believe in yourself, and you will be saved! (PAUL FLIDA *comes in hurriedly.*)

Paul Flida. King Skule, be on your guard! Haakon lies off Elgjarnaes with all his ships!

Skule. Off Elgjarnaes—! He is not far away, then.

Jatgeir. To arms now! If slaying be afoot to-night, I will gladly be the first to fall for you!

Skule. *You,* whom I wish to live for me.

Jatgeir. A man may die for the sake of the life-work of another; but if he is to live, he must live for his own. (*Goes out.*)

Paul Flida (*impatiently*). What are your commands, my liege? The Birchlegs may be in Oslo within the hour!

Skule. It were best if we could journey to the grave of the sainted Thomas Becket; he has helped so many sorrowful and repentant souls.

Paul Flida (*more vehemently*). My liege, do not talk wildly now! The Birchlegs are upon us, I say!

Skule. Let all the churches be opened, that we may take refuge in them and find grace.

Paul Flida. It is in your power to smite all your foes at one stroke, and you talk of taking refuge in the churches!

Skule. Yes, yes, have all the churches set open.

Paul Flida. Be certain that Haakon will violate any sanctuary to destroy the Wilyskins.

Skule. He will not do that; God will guard him from such guilt as that. God always guards Haakon.

Paul Flida (*in deep and painful indignation*). Any

one who heard you speaking now might well ask who is king in this land?

Skule (*smiling sadly*). Yes, Paul Flida, that is the great question—who is king in this land?

Paul Flida (*beseechingly*). You are soul-sick to-night, my liege; let me act for you.

Skule. Yes, yes—do so.

Paul Flida (*going*). First of all I will break down all the bridges.

Skule. Madman! Stop!—Break down all the bridges! Do you know what that means? I have tried it; beware of such a thing!

Paul Flida. What do you wish then, my liege?

Skule. I wish to speak with Haakon.

Paul Flida. He will answer you with his sword's point!

Skule. Go, go—you shall know my wishes later.

Paul Flida. Every moment is precious now! (*Grasps his hand.*) King Skule, let us break down all the bridges, fight like Wolves and trust in Heaven!

Skule (*dully*). Heaven does not trust in me; I dare not trust in Heaven.

Paul Flida. Then short will be the saga of the Wolfskins. (*Goes out at the back of the hall.*)

Skule. I can command a hundred shrewd heads, a thousand doughty arms; but not one loving, trustful heart. That is a king's poverty—no more, no less.

(BAARD BRATTE *comes in from the back.*)

Bratte. There are folk without who have come from afar and ask to speak with you, my liege.

Skule. Who are they?

Bratte. A woman and a priest.

Skule. Let the woman and the priest come in.

(BRATTE *goes out.* SKULE *sits down, deep in thought.* INGEBJÖRG, *dressed in black and so heavily veiled as to conceal her face, comes in. A priest follows her and remains standing by the door.*)

Skule. Who are you?

Ingebjörg. One whom you have loved.

Skule (*shaking his head*). There is no one that can have such memories. Who are you, I ask?

Ingebjörg. One that loves you.

Skule. Then indeed you must be one of the dead.

Ingebjörg (*coming nearer and speaking gently and meaningly*). Skule, son of Baard!

Skule (*springing up with a cry*). Ingebjörg!

Ingebjörg. Do you know me now, Skule?

Skule. Ingebjörg—Ingebjörg!

Ingebjörg. Oh, let me look at you—let me have a long, long look at you! (*Takes his hands. A pause.*) You glorious, beloved, faithful man!

Skule. Lift your veil; let me look me with those eyes that once were as clear and blue as the skies.

Ingebjörg. They have been like rain-laden skies these twenty years; you would not recognise them now, and shall never see them again.

Skule. But your voice is as fresh and sweet and young as it was in those days!

Ingebjörg. I have only used it to whisper your name—to impress your greatness upon a young heart, and to entreat the God of sinners to have mercy on us two who have loved guiltily.

Skule. Have you done that?

Ingebjörg. I have been silent when I have not been speaking lovingly of you; that is why my voice has remained fresh and sweet and young.

Skule. A lifetime lies between us. I have lost and forgotten every fair memory of those days—

Ingebjörg. You had the right.

Skule. And all this time you, Ingebjörg, warm-hearted, faithful woman, have remained up there in the north in icy solitude, garnering and treasuring your memories!

Ingebjörg. It was my happiness.

Skule. To think that I could let you go, to win power and riches! If you had stood by my side as my wife, I should have found it an easier task to make myself king.

Ingebjörg. God has been good to me in not letting it be so. A nature such as mine needed some

great sin to awaken it to repentance and the need of penance.

Skule. And you have come now—?

Ingebjörg. As Andres Skjaldarband's widow.

Skule. Your husband is dead?

Ingebjörg. He died on the way from Jerusalem.

Skule. So he did penance for the slaying of Vegard?

Ingebjörg. That was not why my honoured husband went to the Crusades.

Skule. Not—?

Ingebjörg. No; it was my guilt that he took upon his strong, dear shoulders; it was that he went to wash away in the waters of Jordan; it was that he bled for.

Skule (*softly*). Did he know all?

Ingebjörg. From the first day. And Bishop Nicholas knew it, for I made confession to him; and there was one other that had come to know of it—but in what way, is a mystery to me.

Skule. Who?

Ingebjörg. Vegard Væradal.

Skule. Vegard!

Ingebjörg. He whispered a slighting word of me into my husband's ear; then Andres Skjaldarband drew his sword and slew him where he stood.

Skule. He avenged the woman whom I deceived and forgot.—And why have you sought me now?

Ingebjörge. To make you my last sacrifice.

Skule. What do you mean?

Ingebjörg (*pointing to the priest who is standing at the door*). Look at him!—Peter, my son, come hither!

Skule. Your son—!

Ingebjörge. And yours, King Skule!

Skule (*half bewildered*). Ingebjörg!

(PETER *approaches them in silent agitation and sinks on his knee before* SKULE.)

Ingebjörg. Take him! He has been the light and comfort of my life for twenty years; now you are King of Norway, and the King's son must come into his inheritance; I have no right to him any longer.

Skule (*lifting him up in a transport of happiness*). Come to my heart, my son for whom I have longed with such devouring longing! My son! I have a son! Ha! ha!—who will stand in my way now! (*Goes to Ingebjörg and grasps her hand.*) And you—you give him to me, Ingebjörg! You will not take your words back, will you? You do give him to me?

Ingebjörg. The sacrifice is a heavy one, and I should scarcely have had the strength for it, had not Bishop Nicholas sent him to me with a letter and tidings of Andres Skjaldarband's death. It was the Bishop that charged me with this heavy sacrifice, as penance for all my sin.

Skule. Then your sin is blotted out; and henceforth he is mine only. Is that not so?—mine only?

Ingebjörg. Yes; but I require a promise from you.

Skule. Ask me for what you will!

Ingebjörg. He is as pure as a lamb of God, as now I give him into your hands. The road that leads to the throne is full of dangers; see to it that his soul takes no harm! Do you hear, King Skule, see to it that my child's soul take no harm!

Skule. I promise and swear it to you!

Ingebjörg (*grasping his arm*). If ever you come to know that his soul has taken harm, rather let him die that moment!

Skule. Yes, he should die! I promise and swear it!

Ingebjörg. So can I go back to Haalogaland with a light heart.

Skule. Yes, you can go with a light heart.

Ingebjörg. There I will repent and pray, till the Lord calls me. And when we meet at God's throne, he will come pure and sinless to his mother!

Skule. Pure and sinless! (*Turns to* PETER.) Let me look at you! Yes, those are your mother's features and mine; you are the son I have longed for so sorely.

Peter. My father—my great, noble father—let me live and fight for you! Let your cause become mine; and, let your cause be whatever it will, I know I shall be fighting for the right.

Skule (*with a cry of joy*). You believe in me! You believe in me!

Peter. With all my heart.

Skule. Then all is well, and I am saved indeed! Listen—you shall cast off your monk's hood; the Archbishop shall absolve you from your sacred vows. A king's son must wear a sword and go irresistibly forward to power and glory.

Peter. Together with you, my noble father! We will go together!

Skule (*drawing him to him*). Yes, together—we two alone!

Ingebjörg (*to herself*). To love, to sacrifice everything, and to be forgotten—that is my saga. (*Goes quietly out at the back.*)

Skule. Now shall a great and kingly work be done in Norway! Peter, my son, listen! We will awaken the whole people and gather them together into one; men of Viken and Trönders, Haalogalanders and men of Agde, highlanders and dwellers in Sogn—all shall become one great race; then shall you see how the land will prosper!

Peter. What a great and dazzling thought—!

Skule. Do you grasp it?

Peter. Yes—yes! Clearly!

Skule. And you believe in it?

Peter. Yes, yes—because I believe in you!

Skule (*wildly*). Haakon must die!

Peter. If it is your will, then it must be right that he should die.

Skule. It will mean much bloodshed; but that cannot be helped.

Peter. The blood that is spilt for your sake will not be wasted.

Skule. All the power shall be yours, when I have made the kingdom secure. You shall sit upon the throne, with the crown upon your brow, with the purple robe falling over your shoulders; every man in the land shall bow the knee to you—. (*Trumpet calls are heard afar off.*) Ha! What is that! (*With a cry.*) The Birchlegs! What was it that Paul Flida

said—? (*Hastens towards the back of the hall.* PAUL FLIDA *comes in.*)

Paul Flida (*shouting*). Our hour has come, King Skule!

Skule (*bewildered*). The Birchlegs! King Haakon's army! Where are they?

Paul Flida. They are pouring down over Ekeberg in thousands.

Skule. Sound the trumpets! To arms, to arms! Advise me—how shall we meet them?

Paul Flida. All the churches stand open for us.

Skule. The Birchlegs, I ask you—?

Paul Flida. All the bridges are standing open to them.

Skule. Unhappy man, what have you done?

Paul Flida. Obeyed my king.

Skule. My son! My son! Woe is me—I have lost you your kingdom!

Peter. No, you will conquer! So great a kingly thought cannot die!

Skule. Silence, silence! (*Trumpet calls and shouts are heard nearer.*) To horse! To arms! It is more than life or death that is at stake here! (*Hastens out at the back, followed by the others.*)

SCENE II

(SCENE.—*A street in Oslo. On either side, low wooden houses with porches. In the background St. Hallvard's Churchyard, enclosed by a high wall with a gate. On the left side, at the end of the wall, the Church, with its main door standing open. It is still night; after a little, daybreak begins. The alarm-bell is ringing; far away, on the right, are heard distant sounds of battle and a confused noise.*)

King Skule's Herald (*coming in from the right, and sounding his trumpet*). To arms! To arms, all King Skule's men! (*Sounds his trumpet again and passes on; a little later he is heard sounding his trumpet in the next street.*)

A Woman (*coming out of a house-door on the right*). Merciful God, what is that?

A Townsman (*coming out of a house opposite, half dressed*). The Birchlegs are in the town! Now Skule will be paid for all his ill deeds!

One of Skule's Men (*coming in from a side-street on the left with some companions, all carrying cloaks and weapons on their arms*). Where are the Birchlegs?

Another of Skule's Men (*coming from a house on the right*). I do not know!

The first. Hush! Listen!—They must be down at the Gejte bridge.

The other. Down to the Gejte bridge, then! (*They all hasten out to the right; a townsman comes running from the same side.*)

First Townsman. Ho, neighbour!—where have you come from?

Second Townsman. From down by the river; there is ugly work going on down there.

The Woman. Saint Olaf and Saint Hallvard! Is it the Birchlegs, or who is it?

Second Townsman. Aye, it's the Birchlegs, sure enough, and King Haakon is with them; his ships are all moored at the wharves, but he himself landed off Ekeberg with the best of his men.

First Townsman. He means to take his revenge for the slaughter at Laaka!

Second Townsman. You may be sure of that!

First Townsman. See—the Wilyskins are running away already! (*A crowd of* SKULE'S *men come running in from the right.*)

One of Skule's Men. Into the church! No one can withstand the Birchlegs when they fight as they are doing to-night! (*They rush into the church and bolt the door on the inside.*)

Second Townsman (*looking out to the right*). I can just see a banner far away down the street; it must be King Haakon's.

First Townsman. See how the Wilyskins run! (*A fresh crowd comes in from the right.*)

One of the Crowd. Let us take refuge in the church and pray for mercy! (*They rush toward the door.*)

Others. It is locked! It is locked!

Another. Up to Martestokke, then!

Another. Where is King Skule?

Another. I do not know. Let us away—I see the Birchlegs' banner!

(*They rush out past the church to the left.* HAAKON *comes in from the right with his standard-bearer,* GREGORIUS JONSSON, DAGFINN *and others.*)

Dagfinn. Hark to the war-cry! Skule is rallying his men at the back of the churchyard.

An Old Townsman (*calling from his house to* HAAKON). Be on your guard, my dear liege; the Wolfskins are dangerous now that they are fighting for their lives!

Haakon. Is it you, old Guthorm Erlendsson? You fought both for my father and my grandfather, I know.

The Old Townsman. I would to God I could fight for you too!

Haakon. You are too old for that, and there is no need; men are joining my ranks from all sides.

Dagfinn (*pointing over the wall to the right*). There comes the Duke's banner!

Gregorius Jonsson. It is the Duke himself! He is riding his white charger.

Dagfinn. We must block the way through this gate against him.

Haakon. Sound the trumpet! (*The trumpeter sounds a blast.*) You blew better than that, you whelp, when you blew for money on Bergen wharf. (*The trumpeter sounds a second blast, louder than the first. A crowd comes rushing in.*)

One of Skule's Men (*running in from the right and making for the church, pursued by one of the Birchlegs.*) Spare my life! Spare my life!

The Birchleg. Not if you were sitting on the very altar! (*Cuts him down.*) You seem to be wearing a costly sort of cloak; that will be useful to me. (*As he stoops to take the cloak, he gives a cry and throws*

his sword away from him.) My lord king—not another blow will I strike for you.

Dagfinn. Do you say that at such a time as this?

The Birchleg. Not another blow!

Dagfinn (*cutting him down*). I will spare you the trouble!

The Birchleg (*pointing to his dead enemy*). I thought I had done enough, when I had slain my own brother. (*Dies.*)

Haakon. His brother?

Dagfinn. What! (*Goes up to the corpse*).

Haakon. Is it true?

Dagfinn. It is true enough.

Haakon (*moved*). Does not this show the kind of war we are waging—brother against brother, father against son! Almighty God, surely there must come an end to this!

Gregorius Jonsson. Here comes the Duke, fighting hard with Earl Knut's men!

Dagfinn. Bar this gate against him, King's men!

(*The combatants come into sight.* SKULE'S *men are forcing their way towards the left, driving the Birchlegs back foot by foot.* SKULE *is on his white charger, with drawn sword.* PETER *walks by his side, holding the horse's rein in one hand and holding a crucifix aloft in the other.* PAUL FLIDA *carries* SKULE'S *banner.*)

Skule. Cut them down without mercy! Spare no one! A new heir to the throne is arisen in Norway!

The Birchlegs. A new heir to the throne, he says!

Haakon. Skule, let us share the kingdom!

Skule. All, or nothing!

Haakon. Think of the Queen, your daughter!

Skule. I have a son! I have a son! I can think of no one but him!

Haakon. I, too, have a son; if I fall, he will inherit the kingdom!

Skule. Slay the King's child, wherever you may find it! Slay it on the throne; slay it before the altar; slay it—slay it in the Queen's arms!

Haakon. There you have pronounced your own doom!

Skule (*laying about him*). Slay, slay without mercy! King Skule has a son! Slay, slay! (*The combatants pass out of sight to the left.*)

Gregorius Jonsson. The Wolfskins are breaking through!

Dagfinn. Yes, but only so as to escape by flight.

Gregorius Jonsson. Great Heaven!—the other gate is open; they will all escape through there!

Dagfinn. Up to Martestokke. (*Calls.*) After them, after them, Earl Knut! Take your revenge for Laaka!

Haakon. You heard; he proclaimed my child an outlaw—my innocent child—Norway's chosen king after me!

His Men. Yes, yes, we heard!

Haakon. And what is the punishment for such a crime?

His Men. Death!

Haakon. Then he must die! (*Lifts his hand to take an oath.*) Here I swear—Skule the son of Baard shall die, wherever he be met on unconsecrated ground.

Dagfinn. It is every loyal man's duty to slay him.

A Birchleg (*coming in from the left*). Duke Skule is in flight!

The Townsmen. The Birchlegs are victorious!

Haakon. Which way have they fled?

The Birchleg. Past Martestokke, over to Ejdsvold. Most of them had their horses standing in the streets; otherwise not a single one of them would have escaped with their lives.

Haakon. God be thanked for His help once again! Now the Queen can land in safety.

Gregorius Jonsson (*pointing to the right*). She is landed already, my liege; there she comes.

Haakon (*to the men nearest him*). The heaviest task is before me now; she is a loving daughter. Listen to me; not a word to her of the danger that threatens her child. Promise me, all of you, as one man, to

defend your King's son; but let her know naught of this.

His Men (*in a low voice*). We promise!

(MARGRETE *comes in from the right, with her women.*)

Margrete. Haakon, my husband! Heaven has protected you; you have conquered and are unhurt.

Haakon. Yes, I have conquered. Where is the child?

Margrete. On the King's ship, in safe hands.

Haakon. Go more of you thither. (*Some of the men go.*)

Margrete. Haakon, where is Duke Skule?

Haakon. He is making for the hills.

Margrete. Then he is alive! Husband, may I thank God that he is alive?

Haakon (*fighting painfully with himself*). Listen, Margete. You have been a faithful wife to me; you have followed me through good and ill fortune, and have loved me with surpassing love. Now I must bring heavy sorrow upon you—not of my own wish, but I am King, and therefore I must.

Margrete (*anxiously*). Has it to do with—the Duke?

Haakon. Yes. No bitterer fate could come upon me than to have to live out my life apart from you; but if, after what I have to say to you now, you deem it must be so—if you feel that you can no longer bear to sit by my side, no longer look at me without turning pale—well, then we will separate—live each of us alone—and I shall not reproach you for it.

Margrete. Separate from you! How can such a thought come into your mind? Give me your hand—!

Haakon. Do not touch it! It was but just now lifted in an oath—

Margrete. An oath?

Haakon. An oath that set its inviolable seal on a sentence of death.

Margrete (*with a cry*). My father! Oh, my father!

(*Totters; some of her women hurry to her and support her.*)

Haakon. Yes, Margrete—as king, I have doomed your father to death.

Margrete. Then without doubt he must be guilty of some greater sin than proclaiming himself king.

Haakon. He is; and if now you feel that we must separate—so be it.

Margrete (*coming nearer to him and speaking determinedly*). We can never separate! I am your wife—nothing else in the world but your wife!

Haakon. Are you strong enough? Did you hear, and understand everything? I have spoken your father's doom!

Margete. I heard and understood everything. You have spoken my father's doom.

Haakon. And you do not seek to know what his guilt was?

Margrete. No, it is enough that you know it.

Haakon. But it is to death I have sentenced him!

Margrete (*kneels before him and kisses his hand*). My husband and sovran lord, your sentence must be a just one!

(*Curtain.*)

ACT V

SCENE I

(SCENE.—*A room in the royal palace at Nidaros. On the right, the entrance-door; further forward on the same side, a window; a smaller door on the left. It is nightfall.* PAUL FLIDA, BAARD BRATTE *and others of* SKULE'S *leading men are standing at the window looking up at the sky.*)

One of the Guard. How red it glows!

Another. It stretches half across the sky, like a flaming sword.

Bratte. Saint Olaf protect us!—what can such a dreadful portent betoken?

An Old Wolfskin. Undoubtedly it betokens the death of a mighty chieftain.

Paul Flida. Yes, Haakon's death, my good Wolfskins. He lies out on the fjord with his ships; we may expect him in the town to-night—and this time it is *our* turn to conquer!

Bratte. Do not rely upon it; our men are losing heart.

Paul Flida. And small wonder! Ever since our flight from Oslo, King Skule has shut himself up and refuses to see or to speak to his men.

One of the Guard. There are some in the town that do not know whether to believe him to be alive or dead.

Paul Flida. The King *must* come forth, however ill he is. Speak to him, Bratte—the safety of us all depends upon it.

Bratte. It is of no use; I have spoken to him already.

Paul Flida. Then I must try what I can do. (*Goes to the door on the left and knocks.*) My liege, you must take the reins into your own hands; things cannot go on thus.

Skule (*from within*). I am sick, Paul Flida!

Paul Flida. What else can you expect? You know you have not eaten for two days; you must fortify and tend yourself—

Skule. I am sick.

Paul Flida. God knows, there is no help for it. King Haakon is lying out on the fjord, and may be here in Nidaros at any moment.

Skule. Slay him for me! Kill him and his child too!

Paul Flida. You must go with us, my liege!

Skule. No, no, no—you are surest of good fortune and victory when I am not with you.

(PETER *comes in from the right, fully armed.*)

Peter. There is unrest among the townsmen; they are flocking together in great crowds in front of the palace.

Bratte. If the King does not speak to them, they will desert him when he has most need of them.

Peter. He must speak to them, then. (*Goes to the door on the left.*) Father! The Trönders, the most

faithful of your followers, will fall away from you if you do not give them new courage!

Skule. What did the bard say?

Peter. The bard?

Skule. The bard, that died for my cause at Oslo. "A man cannot give away what he does not himself possess," he said.

Peter. Then neither can you give away your kingdom —for it is mine after you!

Skule. I am coming!

Paul Flida. God be thanked!

(SKULE *comes in from the left; he is pale and worn, and his hair has turned quite grey.*)

Skule. Do not look at me! I would not have you look at me now that I am sick! (*Goes up to* PETER.) Take the kingdom away from you, did you say? Great God, what had I nearly done!

Peter. Ah, forgive me; I know well that whatever you do is the rightful thing.

Skule. No, no—not hitherto; but I mean to be strong and vigorous now. I mean to act! (*Loud cries of "King Skule! King Skule!" are heard without.*) What is that?

Bratte (*at the window*). The townspeople are collecting; the whole of the palace courtyard is full of folk. You must speak to them.

Skule. Do I look like a king? Can I speak to them now?

Peter. You must, my noble father!

Skule. Very well, so be it. (*Goes to the window and draws back the curtain, but lets it go hurriedly and starts back with a cry.*) There is the flaming sword over my head again!

Peter. It portends that the sword of victory is drawn for you.

Skule. If only that were so! (*Goes to the window, and speaks to those outside.*) Trönders, what do you wish? Here stands your king.

A Townsman. Leave the town! The Birchlegs will ravish and burn if they find you here.

Skule. We must all hold together. I have been an

indulgent king to you; I have exacted but a light war-tax from you—

A Voice from the Crowd. What of all the blood that flowed at Laaka and in Oslo?

A Woman. Give me back my husband!

A Boy. Give me back my father and my brother!

Another Woman. Give me back my three sons, King Skule!

A Man. He is not king; he has not been acknowledged king at Saint Olaf's shrine! He is not king!

Skule (*drawing back behind the curtain*). Not acknowledged! Not king!

Paul Flida. It was a fatal thing that the holy shrine was not carried out when you were chosen king.

Bratte. If the townsfolk desert us, we cannot hold Nidaros if the Birchlegs come.

Skule. And they *will* desert us, so long as I have not been acknowledged king at the holy shrine.

Peter. Then let the shrine be carried out—and have yourself acknowledged king now!

Paul Flida (*shaking his head*). It is impossible.

Peter. Is anything impossible for his sake? Summon a Council, and carry out the shrine!

Some of the Men (*recoiling*). Sacrilege!

Peter. No sacrilege. Come, come!—the monks are well disposed towards King Skule; they will give their consent—

Paul Flida. They will not. They dare not, for fear of the Archbishop.

Peter. Are ye king's men, and refuse your help when so great a cause is in danger! Very well; there are others without that will be more willing. My father and king, the monks *shall* give way; I will beg and beseech them. Summon the Council; you shall bear your kingly title rightfully! (*Rushes out to the right.*)

Skule (*with joy shining from his eyes*). Did ye see him? Did ye see my noble son? How his eyes flashed! Aye, we shall all fight and conquer. How strong are the Birchlegs?

Paul Flida. Not too strong for us to overcome them if only the townsfolk will fight on our side.

Skule. They *shall* fight on our side. We must all stand together now and make an end of this terrible strife. Do you not see that it is Heaven's decree that we should end it? Heaven is wrathful with the whole of Norway for the deeds that men have been doing for so long. There is the flaming sword hanging in the sky, night after night; women fall down in birth-pangs in the churches; a sickness of soul has come upon the priests and monks, and they run about the streets crying out that the end of the world has come. Yes, God knows, it is time to end it all at one blow!

Paul Flida. What orders do you give us?

Skule. All the bridges must be broken.

Paul Flida (*to one of the Guard*). Go and see that all the bridges are broken. (*The man goes out.*)

Skule. Collect all our men upon the shore. Not one Birchleg must set foot in Nidaros.

Paul Flida. Well spoken, my liege.

Skule. When the holy shrine is carried out, let the Council be summoned, and all my warriors and the townsfolk be called together.

Paul Flida (*to another of the men*). Go out and see that horns are blown through the streets. (*The man goes out.*)

Skule (*speaking to the crowd from the window*). Be faithful to me, you who are in grief and sorrow! A new day of peace shall dawn over the land again, as in the first fair days of Haakon's reign, when the fields yielded two crops every summer. Be faithful to me; rely on me and believe in me—for it is of *that* I have so sore a need! I will watch over you and fight for you; I will shed my blood for you and die for you, if needs must be; but do not desert me, and do not doubt me—! (*A loud cry, as if of terror, is heard among the crowd.*) What is that?

A voice (*crying wildly*). Atone! Atone!

Bratte (*looking out*). It is some priest, possessed by a devil!

Paul Flida. He is rending his cowl to tatters, and scourging himself.

The Voice. Atone! atone! The last day has come!

Many Voices. Fly, fly! Woe upon Nidaros! A sinful deed!

Skule. What has happened?

Bratte. They are all scattering and recoiling as if a wild beast had come among them.

Skule. Yes, they are all scattering—. (*Gives a cry of joy.*) Ah, what does it matter! We are saved! Look, look—King Olaf's shrine is standing in the courtyard below!

Paul Flida. King Olaf's shrine?

Bratte. Yes, by Heaven—there it stands!

Skule. The monks are faithful to me; so good a deed have they never done before!

Paul Flida. Hark!—the trumpets are summoning the Council.

Skule. Now shall I be lawfully acknowledged king.

(PETER *comes in from the right.*)

Peter. Put on your kingly robes. The holy shrine stands without.

Skule. You have saved the kingdom for me and for yourself; and tenfold thanks shall we give to the good monks for having given way.

Peter. The monks, father? You have naught to thank *them* for.

Skule. Was it not they that helped you?

Peter. They invoked the curse of the Church upon any one who should dare to lay hand on the sacred relics.

Skule. It was the Archbishop, then? He gave in at last?

Peter. The Archbishop invoked more terrible curses than the monks.

Skule. Ah, then I can see that after all I have some men who are faithful to me. (*To those around him.*) You, who should have been the first to help me, stood here afraid and flinched from the task—while down there in the crowd men were found who would dare take so great a guilt upon them for my sake.

Peter. There is not among your men one loyal enough to dare take the guilt upon him.

Skule. Almighty God!—has a miracle happened, then? Who bore the relics out of the church?

Peter. I, father!

Skule (*with a cry*). You! (*All recoil from him with a cry of* "Church-robber!" PAUL FLIDA, BRATTE *and one or two others go out.*)

Peter. The deed had to be done. No man's loyalty is to be depended upon until you have been lawfully acknowledged king. I begged and beseeched the monks, but it was of no avail. So I broke open the church door; no one dared to follow me. I leapt up upon the high altar, grasped the handle of the shrine and strained my knees against the wall. It seemed as though some mysterious power gave me more than mortal strength; the shrine came away from where it was fixed, and I dragged it after me down the floor of the church, while the curses of the monks resounded like a storm through the vaulted roof; I dragged it out of the church, and every one scattered and fled at my approach. When I got at last to the courtyard of the palace, the handle broke off; here it is! (*Holds it in the air.*)

Skule (*in a low, terror-stricken voice*). Church-robber!

Peter. For your sake—for the sake of your great kingly thought! But you will wipe out the guilt; whatever sin there was in it, you will wipe out. You will bring light and peace to our country; a glorious day will dawn upon it! What matter, then, if a night of tempest have preceded that day?

Skule. I seemed to see a halo upon your head, the day your mother brought you to me; now I seem to see the lightning of the Church's curse playing round it.

Peter. Father, father, do not think of me; do not be afraid for me, whatever may happen. You know it is your will that I have fulfilled—then how can any crime be laid to my charge?

Skule. I wanted you to believe in me, and your faith has become a sin.

Peter. For your sake, for your sake! And therefore God dare not do otherwise than wipe it out!

Skule. Pure and guiltless, I promised Ingebjörg—and he mocks at Heaven! (PAUL FLIDA *comes in.*)

Paul Flida. All is in an uproar! This dreadful deed has filled your men with terror; they are flying into the churches.

Skule. They must come out of them! They *shall* come out!

(BAARD BRATTE *comes in.*)

Bratte. The townsfolk have risen against you; they are killing our men wherever they find them, in the streets or in the houses!

One of the Guard (*rushing in*). The Birchlegs are sailing up the river!

Skule. Let the trumpets sound to call my men together! No one must desert me here!

Paul Flida. Impossible; terror has paralysed them.

Skule (*despairingly*). But I *cannot* fall now! My son must not die with a deadly sin upon his soul!

Peter. Do not think of me; you are the only one that matters. Let us try and make our way up to Indherred; every one is on your side there!

Skule. Yes—to flight, to flight! Follow me, any that would save their lives!

Bratte. Which way?

Skule. Over the bridge!

Paul Flida. All the bridges are broken, my liege.

Skule. Broken—! All the bridges broken, you say?

Paul Flida. You should have broken them at Oslo, and then you might have let them stand at Nidaros.

Skule. Across the river, nevertheless—we must save our lives and our souls! To flight! To flight! (*He and* PETER *rush out to the left.*)

Bratte. Aye, better that than to fall at the hands of these townsfolk or the Birchlegs.

Paul Flida. In God's name, to flight, then! (*All follow* SKULE. *The room is empty for a few moments; a confused noise is heard in the distance in the streets; soon after a crowd of townsfolk, with weapons in their hands, burst in through the door on the right.*)

A Townsman. In here! He must be here.

Another. Kill him!

Others. Kill the Church-robber too!

Another. Have a care—their teeth are sharp!

First Townsman. No need for that; the Birchlegs are already in the streets.

Another (*coming in*). Too late—King Skule has fled.

Many Voices. Whither? Whither?

The Townsman. Into one of the churches, I think; they are full of Wolfskins.

Another. Then let us seek him out; great thanks and reward will King Haakon give to the man that slays Skule.

Another. Here come the Birchlegs!

A third. And King Haakon himself!

(*The crowd shout:* "Long live King Haakon!" HAAKON *comes in from the right, followed by* GREGORIUS JONSSON, DAGFINN *and a number of others.*)

Haakon. Yes, you are humble now, you Trönders—you have stood out against me long enough!

First Townsman (*kneeling to him*). Mercy, my liege! Skule was so hard upon us!

Second Townsman (*kneeling*). He forced us, or we would never have followed him.

First Townsman. He seized our goods and obliged us to fight for his unrighteous cause.

Second Townsman. My noble liege, he has been a scourge to his friends as well as to his enemies.

Many Voices. Yes, yes—Skule has been a scourge to the whole land.

Dagfinn. Aye, you speak the truth there.

Haakon. Good. I will talk with you townsfolk later; it is my purpose to punish heavily whatever has been done amiss; but first of all I have something else to think of. Does any one know where Skule is?

Voices. In one of the churches, my liege!

Haakon. Are you so sure of that?

The Crowd. Yes, all the Wolfskins are there.

Haakon (*in a low voice, to* DAGFINN). He must be found; set a watch on all the churches in the town.

Dagfinn. And when he is found, he shall be slain without delay.

Haakon (*in an undertone*). Slain? Dagfinn, Dagfinn, I find it hard.

Dagfinn. My liege, you swore it solemnly at Oslo.

Haakon. And every man in the land will demand his death. (*Turns to* GREGORIUS JONSSON, *and speaks unheard by the rest.*) Go; you were once his friend; seek him out and bid him escape from the country.

Gregorius Jonsson (*jovfully*). Is that your will, my liege?

Haakon. For my good and dear wife's sake.

Gregorius Jonsson. But if he will not fly—if he neither will nor can?

Haakon. Then, in God's name, neither can I spare him; then must my kingly word stand. Go!

Gregorius Jonsson I will go, and will do my best. Heaven grant I may succeed! (*Goes out.*)

Haakon. You, Dagfinn, take some trusty men with you and go down to my ship; you shall escort the Queen and my son up to the convent at Elgesæter.

Dagfinn. My liege, do you think she will be safe there?

Haakon. Nowhere safer. The Wolfskins have shut themselves up in the churches, and she has asked me so urgently; her mother is at Elgesæter.

Dagfinn. Yes, I know that.

Haakon. Take the Queen my most loving greetings, and greet Ragnhild too. You may tell them that as soon as the Wolfskins have fallen at my feet and received my pardon, all the bells in Nidaros shall be set ringing, as a sign that peace is come to the land again. —You townsfolk shall come before me for justice to-morrow, and each one shall be punished according to his deserts. (*Goes out with his men.*)

First Townsman. 'Twill be a black to-morrow for us!

Second Townsman. Aye, a heavy reckoning to pay!

First Townsman. We have stood out against Haakon so long—we were the first to shout for Skule when he proclaimed himself king.

Second Townsman. Ay, and gave Skule ships and

war-tax, and bought of him all the spoil he stole from Haakon's thanes.

First Townsman. Aye, a black to-morrow!

Third Townsman (*coming in hurriedly from the left*). Where is Haakon? Where is the King?

First Townsman. What do you want with him?

Third Townsman. To bring him a great and important message.

Voices. What is it?

Third Townsman. I tell it to no other than the King himself.

Voices. Yes, tell us, tell us!

Third Townsman. Skule is fled up towards Elgesæter.

First Townsman. Impossible! He is in one of the churches.

Third Townsman. No, no, he and his son crossed the river in a boat.

First Townsman. Ah, then we can disarm Haakon's anger.

Second Townsman. Yes, let us tell him at once where Skule is.

First Townsman. No, we can do better than that. Let us say nothing, but go ourselves up to Elgesæter and kill Skule.

Second Townsman. Yes, yes—let us do that!

Another Voice. Were there many Wolfskins went across with him?

Third Townsman. No, there were but few men in the boat.

First Townsman. Let us arm ourselves as fully as we can. Ah, now we can save our fellow-townsmen! Tell no one what we have in hand; there are enough of us for the deed—and now, up to Elgesæter!

All (*in low voices*). Yes, up to Elgesæter!

(*They go quickly but cautiously out to the left.*)

Scene II

(Scene.—*A forest on the heights above Nidaros. The moon is shining, but the night is cloudy, so that the background is only visible indistinctly, and at times*

scarcely visible at all. Tree trunks and fragments of rock are lying around. SKULE, PETER, PAUL FLIDA, BAARD BRATTE *and several Wolfskins come in through the trees on the left.*)

Peter. Come here and rest, father!

Skule. Yes, let me rest—let me rest. (*Sinks down upon a rock.*)

Peter. How is it with you?

Skule. I am starving! Sick, sick! I see dead men's wraiths!

Peter (*springing up*). Help!—give the King some bread.

Bratte. Every man is king here; our lives are at stake here. Stand up, Skule, if you are king; do not lie there—get up and govern.

Peter. If you mock my father, I will kill you!

Bratte. I shall be killed anyway; King Haakon will give me no mercy, for I was his thane and deserted him for Skule's sake. Devise some plan that may save us! There is no deed so desperate that I would not attempt it now.

One of the Wolfskins. If only we could get over to the monastery at Holm.

Paul Flida. Better to go to Elgesæter.

Bratte (*breaking out suddenly*). Best of all to go down to Haakon's ship and steal away his child.

Paul Flida. Are you mad?

Bratte. No, no—it is our only way of safety and easy to accomplish. The Birchlegs are searching all the houses, and have set a watch on the churches; they do not suppose that any of us has been able to escape, as all the bridges were broken. There cannot possibly be many men left on board their ships; and once we have the heir to the throne in our power, Haakon must make peace with us or his child shall die with us. Who will join me in saving our own lives?

Paul Flida. Not I, if that is the way it is to be saved.

Others. Nor I! Nor I!

Peter. If it would save my father—!

Bratte. If you will join with me, come. I am going down by the Hlade rocks; there the men are in hiding

whom we met at the foot of the mountain. They are the wildest and most desperate fellows among all the Wolfskins; they swam the river, for they knew they would meet no mercy in the churches. Those boys will be ready enough to pay a visit to the King's ship, I dare swear! Which of you will go with us?

Voices. I! I!

Peter. Perhaps I, too; but first of all I must know that my father is safe in shelter.

Bratte. Before daybreak we must be off up the river. Come, there is a path here which leads over to Hlade. (*He and several others go out to the right.*)

Peter (*to* PAUL FLIDA). Say nothing of this to my father, he is soul-sick to-night; we must act for him. There *is* salvation for us in Bratte's plan; when the day dawns the King's son shall be in our hands.

Paul Flida. To meet his death, I suppose. Do you not see that it is a sin—?

Peter. It cannot be a sin, for my father pronounced the child's doom at Oslo. He must be swept out of my father's path, for he stands in his way. My father has a great kingly thought to bring into being; it is no matter who or how many are sacrificed for that end.

Paul Flida. It was an unhappy day for you when you learnt that you were Skule's son. (*Listens.*) Hush! Throw yourself upon the ground—some one is coming!

(*All throw themselves on the ground and conceal themselves behind rocks and tree-trunks. A troop of people, some riding, some walking, is seen indistinctly in the mist among the trees. They come from the left and disappear to the right.*

Peter. There is the Queen.

Paul Flida. Yes, she is talking to Dagfinn. Hush!

Peter. They are going to Elgesæter. The King's son is with them!

Paul Flida. And the Queen's women.

Peter. But only four men! Up, up, King Skule—now is your kingdom saved!

Skule. My kingdom? It is a dark one—like that of the angel who set himself up against God.

(*A band of monks come in from the right.*)

A Monk. Whose voice is that? Is it one of King Skule's men?

Paul Flida. King Skule himself.

The Monk. God be thanked that we have found you, my dear lord. We were told by some of the townsmen that you had taken this road, and we are almost as unsafe in Nidaros as you yourself.

Peter. You deserved to die for not allowing Saint Olaf's shrine to be brought out.

The Monk. The Archbishop forbade it; but we will gladly serve King Skule nevertheless; we have always been his supporters. We have brought monks' cowls for you and your men; put them on, and you will easily gain entrance to one of the monasteries, and try to win Haakon's mercy.

Skule. Yes, give me a monk's cowl. I and my son must stand on consecrated ground. I will go to Elgesæter.

Peter (*in a low voice, to* PAUL FLIDA). See that my father comes safely out of this—

Paul Flida. Do you forget that there are Birchlegs at Elgesæter?

Peter. Only four men; you could easily overcome them, and within the convent walls they will not dare to attack you. I go to seek Baard Bratte.

Paul Flida. Take heed what you are doing!

Peter. It is not on the King's ship but at Elgesæter that outlaws will save the kingdom for my father! (*Goes hurriedly out to the right.*)

One of Skule's Men (*whispering to another*). Are you going to Elgesæter with Skule?

The others. Hush! no. There are Birchlegs there.

The first. I am not going there either; but say nothing to the others.

The Monk. And now away, two and two—a warrior and a monk.

Second Monk (*sitting on a tree-trunk behind him*). I take King Skule.

Skule. Do you know the way?

The Monk. The broad way.

First Monk. Hasten; let us disperse by different paths, and meet outside the convent gate.

(*They go out through the trees to the right; the mist lifts and the comet is seen shining red in the hazy sky.*)

Skule. Peter, my son—! (*Starts back.*) Ah, there is that gleaming sword in the sky!

The Monk (*sitting behind him on a tree-trunk*). And here am *I!*

Skule. Who are you?

The Monk. An old acquaintance.

Skule. I have never seen a man look so pale.

The Monk. So you do not recognise me?

Skule. It is you that are willing to escort me to Elgesæter.

The Monk. It is I that am willing to escort you to the throne.

Skule. Can you do that?

The Monk. I can if you are willing.

Skule. And by what means?

The Monk. By means that I have used before. I will take you up on a high mountain and show you all the glory of the world.

Skule. I have seen all the glory of the world already in dreams that tempted me.

The Monk. It was I that gave you the dreams.

Skule. Who are you?

The Monk. An envoy from the oldest heir to a throne in all the world.

Skule. From the oldest heir to a throne in all the world?

The Monk. From the first Earl, who revolted against the greatest Kingdom—and founded a kingdom himself that shall last till doomsday.

Skule (*with a shriek*). Bishop Nicholas!

The Monk (*getting up*). So you know me now?
Well, you knew me once;
'Tis all for *your* sake that I'm here.
We sailed together, you and I,
In the self-same boat for many a year.
That dark, wild night when we parted last,

I was terror-stricken with fears of hell;
I paid the monks for chants and prayers,
I paid for masses and sacring bell;
They said fourteen, though I paid for but ...en
And, in spite of it all, didn't get into heaven.

Skule. And now you are come from down below—

The Monk. Yes, I am come from the lower realms
That they say such ugly things about;
I assure you it's not such a dreadful place,
Nor nearly as hot as they make it out.

Skule. And you have learnt to be a bard, it seems, old Bagler chieftain!

The Monk. Yes, and to speak in Latin too!
I once was weak in that, you know;
And now I doubt if any's stronger.
Down there, to make a decent show,
You have to learn the Latin tongue,—
Indeed, you scarce get in without it;
Among such learned company
You feel you have no choice about it,
When fifty men who lived as Popes
Sit down with you each day to feast,
And quite five hundred Cardinals
And seven thousand bards at least.

Skule. Greet your Master and thank him for being a good friend to me. You can tell him that he is the only king to send help to Skule the First of Norway.

The Monk. And now, King Skule, learn why I
Was sent. My master down below
Has many servants, and to each
He gives a district (you must know)
To keep his eye on. I'm at home
In Norway, so that fell to me.
Haakon defies us, and is not
The man for us at all; so he
Must meet his death, and on the throne
You wear the hard-won crown alone.

Skule. Yes, give me the crown! If only I have *that*, who knows but I may so contrive that I shall buy myself free again.

The Monk. We can discuss that question later,
But now must use the precious hours.
His child is now at Elgesæter;
Kill him, and everything is yours!
All opposition will disperse
As straws before a tempest fly,
And then you will be king indeed
And will have gained the victory!

Skule. Are you so certain that I shall have gained the victory?

The Monk. The whole of Norway sighs for peace;
But Norway's king must have an heir
To follow him upon the throne,
The country's sick of endless war.
Arise, King Skule! 'Tis to-night,
Or never, you must crush your foes.
See, in the north there is a light
That through the thinning mist-wrack shows;
'Tis there the ships in silence lie.
And hark! a distant murmur grows
With tramp of men. If you but swear
A solemn oath, all these are yours—
A thousand ships upon the fjord,
A thousand warriors on its shores!

Skule. What oath? Tell me!

The Monk. To gain the summit of your hopes
You need not do a single thing
But follow out your dearest wish.
Lands, castles, towns and everything
Are yours if you but swear your son
Shall, after you, be Norway's king!

Skule (*lifting his hand, as if to take an oath*). My son shall—. (*Checks himself suddenly and exclaims in terror-stricken tones:*) The Church-robber? Put all the power into his hands? Ah, now I understand you—it is the damnation of his soul that you seek! Away from me, away from me! (*Stretches his arms up to heaven*). Pity me, Thou to whom I now cry for help in my direst need! (*Falls to the ground.*)

The Monk. Perdition!—it all was going so well,
So willingly to my lure he came;

But the Powers of Light have played a trick
I did not know—and have won the game.
No matter! I've no need for haste,
Perpetuum mobile's still a might;
My power's assured for ages yet
O'er all that do deny the Light;
Of those Norwegians I shall be King,
Though to them my power's a hidden thing.
(*Moves forward.*)
As long as the men of Norway act
With faltering hand and feeble mind—
Shut up their hearts and starve their souls,
And sway like willows before the wind—
Caring for nothing but to spurn
And overthrow whate'er is great—
Hoisting the flag of cowardice,
And leaving honour to its fate—
So long you'll feel old Nicholas' hand,
The Bagler-Bishop at work in the land!

(*Disappears in the mists among the trees. After a short pause,* SKULE *half rises and looks around him.*)

Skule. Where is he—the one in black? (*Springs up.*) My guide, my guide, where are you? Gone!—No matter; I know the way I must go now, both to Elgesæter and farther than that.

(*Goes out to the right.*)

SCENE III

(SCENE.—*The courtyard of the convent at Elgesæter. On the left side lies the chapel with an entrance from the courtyard; the chapel windows are lit up. Along the opposite side of the courtyard are some low buildings. At the back, the convent wall with a massive gate which is bolted. It is bright moonlight. Three Birchleg chieftains are standing at the gate.* MARGRETE, RAGNHILD *and* DAGFINN *come out of the chapel.*)

Ragnhild (who seems half beside herself). King Skule obliged to take refuge in the church, you say? He! he!—in flight, begging for sanctuary at the altar—

begging for his life, perhaps! No, no, it cannot be true; but God will punish you who have dared to let such things come to pass!

Margrete. Dear good mother, restrain yourself; you do not know what you are saying. It is your grief that speaks.

Ragnhild. Listen, Birchlegs! It should be Haakon that is on his knees before the altar, begging King Skule for his life and for peace!

One of the Birchlegs. Those are hard words for loyal men to listen to with patience.

Margrete. Respect a wife's grief!

Ragnhild. King Skule condemned to die! Have a care what will happen when he has the upper hand again!

Dagfinn. That he will never do, my lady Ragnhild.

Margrete. Hush, hush!

Ragnhild. Do you believe that Haakon dare let such a sentence be carried out if he find the king?

Dagfinn. King Haakon knows best himself whether a king's oath can be broken.

Ragnhild (*to* MARGRETE). And this is the monster you have followed loyally and lovingly! Are you your father's child? May you be punished for this! Away from me, away from me!

Margrete. Blessed be your mouth, even though it curses me now.

Ragnhild. I must away down to Nidaros—into the church to find King Skule. He sent me away from him when all went well with him; he did not need me then, I know; but now he will not be wroth with me for going to him. Open the gate for me! Let me away to Nidaros!

Margrete. Mother—in the name of God's mercy—. (*A loud knocking is heard at the convent gate.*)

Dagfinn. Who knocks?

Skule (*from without*). A king.

Dagfinn. Skule!

Ragnhild. King Skule!

Margrete. My father!

Skule. Open, open!

Dagfinn. We cannot open to outlaws.

Skule. It is a king that knocks, I say; a king that has no roof to shelter his head; a king that must find consecrated ground or he will lose his life.

Margrete. Dagfinn, Dagfinn, he is my father!

Dagfinn (*going up to the gate and opening a small trap-door in it*). Are you come with many men to this convent?

Skule. With all the men that have remained faithful to me in my need.

Dagfinn. And how many is that?

Skule. Fewer than one.

Margrete. He is alone, Dagfinn!

Ragnhild. May Heaven's wrath strike you if you deny him entrance to consecrated ground!

Dagfinn. In God's name, then! (*He opens the gate; the* BIRCHLEGS *uncover their heads respectfully;* SKULE *comes into the courtyard.*)

Margrete (*falling on* SKULE'S *neck*). Father! My dear, unhappy father!

Ragnhild (*stepping between* SKULE *and the* BIRCHLEGS). You feign respect for him, and mean to betray him like Judas! Do not dare to come near him! You shall not touch him while I am alive!

Dagfinn. He is safe here, for he is on consecrated ground.

Margrete. And not one of all your men had the courage to follow you to-night!

Skule. There were both monks and warriors on the way hither with me; but they slipped away from me, one by one, for they knew there were Birchlegs at Elgesæter. Paul Flida was the last to forsake me; he came with me to the gate, and then he grasped my hand in farewell and thanked me for the days when there were still Wolfskins in Norway.

Dagfinn (*to the* BIRCHLEGS). Go in, chieftains, and guard the King's child; I must away to Nidaros and tell the King that Skule is at Elgesæter. So great a matter as this, he must deal with himself.

Margrete. Dagfinn, Dagfinn, have you the heart to do that!

Dagfinn. I should serve my king and my country ill if I did else. (*To his men.*) Bolt the door after me, guard the child, and open to no one until the King comes. (*In a low voice, to* SKULE:) Farewell, Skule—and God grant you a blessed end. (*He goes out through the gate. The* BIRCHLEGS *shut it after him and go into the chapel.*)

Ragnhild. Yes, let Haakon come; I will not forsake you. My loving arms shall hold you closer than they have ever held you yet.

Margrete. How pale you are—and aged; you are cold.

Skule. I am not cold—but I am weary, weary.

Margrete. Come in, then, and rest.

Skule. Yes, yes; it will soon be time to rest, methinks. (SIGRID *comes in from the chapel.*)

Sigrid. At last you are come, brother!

Skule. Sigrid! You here?

Sigrid. Remember that I promised you we should met again when you needed me in your darkest hour.

Skule. Where is your child, Margrete?

Margrete. Asleep in the sacristy.

Skule. So all our race are together at Elgesæter to-night.

Sigrid. Yes, gathered together after long distracted years.

Skule. Now we only lack Haakon.

Margrete and Ragnhild (*clinging to him in an outburst of grief*). Father!—Husband!

Skule (*looking at them with emotion*). Have you loved me so dearly, you two? I sought for good fortune without, and was blind to the fact that I had a home where I could find it. I sought love sinfully and guiltily, and never saw that love lawful in the eyes of God and men lay to my hand. And you, Ragnhild, my wife—you against whom I have so greatly sinned—you cling to me with sweet warmth in the hour of my sorest need; you can tremble and fear for the life of a man who has never shed a ray of sunshine on the path of yours.

Ragnhild. You have sinned against me? Oh, Skule,

never say that. Do you think I would ever have dared accuse you? I have always been too poor a thing for you, my husband; there can be no blame to you for anything that you have done.

Skule. Have you had such faith in me, Ragnhild?

Ragnhild. From the first day I saw you.

Skule (*with more animation*). When Haakon comes, I will implore his pardon! You dear, sweet women—oh, how good life is!

Sigrid (*with a cry of terror*). Skule, my brother! Woe upon you if you stray from the path to-night!

(*A noise is heard without; then knocking is heard at the door.*)

Margrete. Listen, listen! What is that noise at the gate?

Ragnhild. Who knocks?

Voices (*from without*). Townsfolk from Nidaros! Open! We know Skule is within there!

Skule. Yes, he is here—what do you want with him?

Voices. Come out, come out! You shall die, you wretch!

Margrete. Do you dare to threaten him so?

A Man's Voice. King Haakon pronounced his doom at Oslo.

Another. It is every man's duty to slay him.

Margrete. I am the Queen; I command you to begone!

A Voice. It is Skule's daughter and not the Queen that speaks so.

Another. You have no power of life and death; the King has doomed him.

Ragnhild. Into the church, Skule! For God's sake, do not let the bloodthirsty men come near you!

Skule. Yes, into the church; I will not fall at the hands of these men. Wife—daughter—I feel as though I had found peace and light; I cannot bear to be robbed of them so suddenly! (*Turns to go into the chapel.*)

Peter (*whose voice is heard without, on the right-hand side*). Father! My King! You are near your victory now!

Skule (*with a cry*). He! He! (*Sinks down upon the chapel steps.*)

Ragnhild. Who is it?

One of the Townsfolk (*from without*). Look, look!—the Church-robber is climbing over the convent roof!

Another. Stone him! Stone him!

(PETER *comes into sight on a roof on the right-hand side and leaps down into the courtyard.*)

Peter. Well met again, father!

Skule (*looking at him in terror*). You!—I had forgotten you! Whence are you come?

Peter (*wildly*). Where is Haakon's child?

Margrete. Haakon's child!

Skule (*springing up*). Whence are you come, I ask?

Peter. From Hladehammer. I have told Baard Bratte and the Wolfskins that Haakon's child is at Elgesæter to-night.

Margrete. Good God!

Skule. You have done that? And what now?

Peter. They are collecting their men and making for the convent.—Where is Haakon's child, woman?

Margrete (*who has placed herself in front of the chapel door*). Asleep in the sacristy!

Peter. No matter if he were asleep on the altar! I have dragged out Saint Olaf's shrine; I am not afraid to drag out Haakon's child!

Ragnhild (*calling to Skule*). This is the man you have loved so dearly!

Margrete. Father, father! How could you forget all of us for his sake!

Skule. He was as pure as a lamb of God when the penitent woman gave him to me; it is his faith in me that has made him what he is now!

Peter (*without listening to him*). The child *shall* be brought out! Slay it—slay it even in the Queen's arms; those were Skule's words at Oslo.

Margrete. Sinful, sinful!

Peter. A saint might do it without sin, since my father has said it! My father is King, for his is the great kingly thought!

Townsfolk (*beating at the gate*). Open! Come out,

you and the Church-robber, or we will burn the convent down!

Skule (*with sudden resolution*). The great kingly thought! Aye, it is *that* that has poisoned your beautiful young soul! Pure and guiltless I was to give you back; it has been your faith in me that has driven you so madly from crime to crime, from one mortal sin to another! Ah, but I can save you yet—I can save us all! (*Calls out towards the gate:*) Wait, wait, you townsfolk; I am coming!

Margrete (*grasping his hand in terror*). Father, what are you going to do?

Ragnhild (*clinging to him with a cry*). Skule!

Sigrid (*dragging them apart from him and calling out in tones of wild joy*). Let him go, let him go, women!—his thought is unfolding its wings now!

Skule (*to* PETER, *calmly and earnestly*). You saw in me the chosen of heaven—the man who should do the great kingly deed for our country. Look closer at me, deluded boy! The rags of kingship, that I have decked myself out with, were borrowed and stolen. Now I lay them off, one by one.

Peter (*piteously*). My great, noble father, do not say such things!

Skule. The kingly thought is Haakon's, not mine; he alone has the strength from on high that can bring that thought to reality. You have trusted to a lie; turn away from me and save your soul.

Peter (*in broken accents*). The kingly thought is Haakon's!

Skule. I yearned to be the greatest man in the land. My God, my God!—see, I humble myself before Thee, and stand before Thee the poorest of Thy creatures.

Peter. Oh God, take me out of this world! Punish me for all my guilt, but take me out of this world—for I am homeless in it now! (*Sinks down upon the chapel steps.*)

Skule. I had a friend, who bled for me at Oslo. He said: "A man may die for the sake of the life-work of another; but if he is to live, he must live for his own."

I have no life-work of my own to live for—nor can I live for Haakon's—but I can die for his.

Margrete. No, no, you shall never do that!

Skule (*taking her hand and looking lovingly at her*). Do you love your husband, Margrete?

Margrete. More than anything in the world.

Skule. You could endure his dooming me to death; but could you endure it if he were to let his sentence be carried out?

Margrete. God grant me strength!

Skule. Could you, Margrete?

Margrete (*softly, and with a shudder*). No, no—we should have to part—I could never dare to look on him again.

Skule. You would shut all the light out of his life and yours. Rest assured, Margrete—there shall be no need for that.

Ragnhild. Fly far from this country, Skule! I will follow you when and where you will.

Skule (*shaking his head*). With a mocking shadow always between us?—I have found you to-night for the first time; no shadow must come between you and me, my gentle, faithful wife; and therefore we must never join our lives together again on earth.

Sigrid. My royal brother! I see you have no need of me; I see you know what path you must tread!

Skule. Some men are fated to live, and some to die. My will has always led me where God's finger did not point out the way; that is why I have never seen my way clearly till to-night. I have destroyed my peaceful family life, and can never regain it. As for my sins against Haakon, I can redeem them by freeing him from a duty that would part him from the dearest thing he has. The townsfolk are without; I will not wait for King Haakon! The Wolfskins are near; as long as I am alive, they will never be turned from their purpose. If they find me here I cannot save your child, Margrete. Look up at the heavens! See, how the flaming sword that has been drawn over my head is paling and fading! Yes, yes—God has spoken and I have understood Him; and His wrath is appeased.

It is at the feet of no earthly king that I am to cast myself on Elgesæter's holy ground and pray for grace; it is into the Holy of Holies under the vaulted roof of Heaven that I am to go, and it is to the King of Kings that I am to pray for grace and pardon for all my sins!

Sigrid. Do not hold him back! Do not oppose the will of God! The day is dawning—dawning over Norway and over his tortured soul! Have we frightened women not hidden long enough in our closets—crouching terror-stricken in the darkest corners, listening to all the horrors that were being done outside, listening to the bloody deeds that were staining the land from end to end? Have we not lain in the churches, pale and as if turned to stone, and never dared to look out?—just as Christ's disciples lay in Jerusalem on that great day when they took Him to Golgotha! Use your wings, Skule—and woe to them that would seek to restrain you now!

Ragnhild. Go hence in peace, my husband! Go where no mocking shadow can come between us when we meet again. (*Rushes into the chapel.*)

Margrete. Farewell, father—farewell! A thousand times farewell! (*Follows Ragnhild.*)

Sigrid (*opening the chapel doors and calling in*). Hither, hither, all ye women! Join your voices in prayer! Let the sound of your chants go up to God, to tell Him that now Skule the son of Baard comes home, a penitent, after his wandering in the paths of evil on earth!

Skule. Sigrid, my faithful sister, greet King Haakon from me. Say to him that though, even in this my last hour, I do not know if he be the rightful king, I know this for certain—that he is the one that God has chosen.

Sigrid. I will give him your greeting.

Skule. And there is one other you must greet, too. Up in the north, in Haalogaland, sits a penitent woman. Tell her that her son has gone before her to his rest—that he followed me when his soul was in peril.

Sigrid. I will.

Skule. Tell her that it was not with his heart that

he sinned, and that assuredly he shall be pure and guiltless when they meet again.

Sigrid. I will. (*Points to the gate.*) Listen, they are breaking the lock!

Skule (*pointing to the chapel*). Listen, they are singing to God, imploring salvation and peace!

Sigrid. Listen, listen! All the bells in Nidaros are ringing—!

Skule (*with a sad smile*). They are ringing a king to his grave.

Sigrid. No, they are ringing for your real crowning now! Farewell, brother; take the purple cloak of Christ's Blood upon your shoulders—it can cover all guiltiness! Go into the great Temple and receive the crown of life. (*Rushes into the chapel. During the rest of the scene the sound of chanting and of bells continues.*)

Voices (*without the gate*). We have broken the lock! Do not force us to violate the sanctuary!

Skule. I am coming.

Townsfolk. The Church-robber must come too!

Skule. Yes, the Church-robber shall come too. (*Goes up to* PETER.) My son, are you ready?

Peter. Yes, father, I am ready.

Skule (*looking up*). Oh God, I am but a poor wretch, with naught but my life to give; but do Thou take that, and watch over Haakon's great kingly thought.—Now, give me your hand!

Peter. Here is my hand, father.

Skule. And do not be afraid of what is before us.

Peter. No, father, I am not afraid when I go with you.

Skule. We two have never trod a safer road together. (*He opens the gate; a crowd of townspeople confront him, brandishing their weapons.*) Here we are; we come of our own free will;—but do not strike him in the face. (*They go out hand in hand; the gate swings shut.*)

A Voice. No mercy! Strike where you can! Down with them!

Skule's Voice. It is shameful to treat chieftains so!

(*A rapid clashing of weapons is heard; then a heavy fall; then silence for a moment.*)

A Voice. They are both dead! (*The King's trumpet is heard.*)

Another Voice. Here comes King Haakon with all his guard!

Voices. Hail, Haakon; now you have no more enemies! (*The gate is thrown open.*)

Gregorius Jonsson (*stopping for a moment by the corpses of* SKULE *and* PETER). I am too late, then! (*Goes into the courtyard.*)

Dagfinn. It would have been an ill thing for Norway had you come earlier. (*Calls out.*) In here, King Haakon! (HAAKON *is seen standing before* SKULE'S *corpse.*)

Haakon. His body blocks my path!

Dagfinn. If Haakon is to go forward, it must be over Skule's body!

Haakon. In God's name, then! (*Steps over the corpse and comes into the courtyard.*)

Dagfinn. At last you can take up your kingly tasks with free hands. Within there are those you love; in Nidaros the bells are ringing in peace to the land; and there lies he that was your worst enemy.

Haakon. Every one judged him wrongly; there was a mystery about him.

Dagfinn. A mystery?

Haakon (*grasps his arm and says softly:*) Skule was God's step-child on earth; that was the mystery.

(*The sound of the women's chants rises louder from the chapel; all the bells in Nidaros are set ringing. The curtain falls.*)

PILLARS OF SOCIETY

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Karsten Bernick, a shipbuilder.
Mrs. Bernick, his wife.
Olaf, their son, thirteen years old.
Martha Bernick, Karsten Bernick's sister.
Johan Tönnesen, Mrs. Bernick's younger brother.
Lona Hessel, Mrs. Bernick's elder half-sister.
Hilmar Tönnesen, Mrs. Bernick's cousin.
Dina Dorf, a young girl living with the Bernicks.
Rörlund, a schoolmaster.
Rummel, a merchant.
Vigeland, Sandstad, } tradesmen.
Krap, Bernick's confidental clerk.
Aune, foreman of Bernick's shipbuilding yard.
Mrs. Rummel.
Hilda Rummel, her daughter.
Mrs. Holt.
Netta Holt, her daughter.
Mrs. Lynge.
Townsfolk and visitors, foreign sailors, steamboat passengers, etc., etc.

(*The action takes place at the Bernicks' house in one of the smaller coast towns in Norway.*)

ACT I.

(SCENE.—*A spacious garden-room in the* BERNICKS' *house. In the foreground on the left is a door leading to* BERNICK'S *business room; farther back in the same wall, a similar door. In the middle of the opposite wall is a large entrance-door, which leads to the street. The wall in the background is almost wholly composed of plate-glass; a door in it opens upon a broad flight of steps which lead down to the garden; a sun-awning is stretched over the steps. Below the steps a part of the garden is visible, bordered by a fence with a small gate in it. On the other side of the fence runs a street, the opposite side of which is occupied by small wooden houses painted in bright colours. It is summer, and the sun is shining warmly. People are seen, every now and then, passing along the street and stopping to talk to one another; others going in and out of a shop at the corner; etc., etc.*

In the room a gathering of ladies is seated round a table. MRS. BERNICK *is presiding; on her left side are* MRS. HOLT *and her daughter* NETTA, *and next to them* MRS. RUMMEL *and* HILDA RUMMEL. *On* MRS. BERNICK'S *right are* MRS. LYNGE, MARTHA BERNICK *and* DINA DORF. *All the ladies are busy working. On the table lie great piles of linen garments and other articles of clothing, some half finished and some merely cut out. Farther back, at a small table on which two pots of flowers and a glass of sugared water are standing,* RÖRLUND *is sitting, reading aloud from a book with gilt edges, but only loud enough for the spectators to catch a word now and then. Out in the garden* OLAF BERNICK *is running about and shooting at a target with a toy crossbow.*

After a moment AUNE *comes in quietly through the door on the right. There is a slight interruption in the reading.* MRS. BERNICK *nods to him and points to the door on the left.* AUNE *goes quietly across,*

knocks softly at the door of BERNICK'S *room, and after a moment's pause knocks again.* KRAP *comes out of the room, with his hat in his hand and some papers under his arm.*)

Krap. Oh, it was you knocking?

Aune. Mr. Bernick sent for me.

Krap. He did; but he cannot see you. He has deputed me to tell you—

Aune. Deputed you? All the same, I would much rather—

Krap. —deputed me to tell you what he wanted to say to you. You must give up these Saturday lectures of yours to the men.

Aune. Indeed? I supposed I might use my own time—

Krap. You must not use your own time in making the men useless in working hours. Last Saturday you were talking to them of the harm that would be done to the workmen by our new machines and the new working methods at the yard. What makes you do that?

Aune. I do it for the good of the community.

Krap. That's curious, because Mr. Bernick says it is disorganising the community.

Aune. My community is not Mr. Bernick's, Mr. Krap! As president of the Industrial Association, I must—

Krap. You are, first and foremost, president of Mr. Bernick's shipbuilding yard; and, before everything else, you have to do your duty to the community known as the firm of Bernick & Co.; that is what every one of us lives for. Well, now you know what Mr. Bernick had to say to you.

Aune. Mr. Bernick would not have put it that way, Mr. Krap! But I know well enough whom I have to thank for this. It is that damned American boat. Those fellows expect to get work done here the way they are accustomed to it over there, and that—

Krap. Yes, yes, but I can't go into all these details. You know now what Mr. Bernick means, and that is sufficient. Be so good as to go back to the yard;

probably you are needed there. I shall be down myself in a little while.—Excuse me, ladies! (*Bows to the ladies and goes out through the garden and down the street.* AUNE *goes quietly out to the right.* RÖRLUND, *who has continued his reading during the foregoing conversation, which has been carried on in low tones, has now come to the end of the book, and shuts it with a bang.*)

Rörlund. There, my dear ladies, that is the end of it.

Mrs. Rummel. What an instructive tale!

Mrs. Holt. And such a good moral!

Mrs. Bernick. A book like that really gives one something to think about.

Rörlund. Quite so; it presents a salutary contrast to what, unfortunately, meets our eyes every day in the newspapers and magazines. Look at the gilded and painted exterior displayed by any large community, and think what it really conceals!—emptiness and rottenness, if I may say so; no foundation of morality beneath it. In a word, these large communities of ours now-a-days are whited sepulchres.

Mrs. Holt. How true! How true!

Mrs. Rummel. And for an example of it we need look no farther than at the crew of the American ship that is lying here just now.

Rörlund. Oh, I would rather not speak of such offscourings of humanity as that. But even in higher circles—what is the case there? A spirit of doubt and unrest on all sides; minds never at peace, and instability characterising all their behaviour. Look how completely family life is undermined over there! Look at their shameless love of casting doubt on even the most serious truths!

Dina (*without looking up from her work*). But are there not many big things done there too?

Rörlund. Big things done—? I do not understand—.

Mrs. Holt (*in amazement*). Good gracious, Dina—!

Mrs. Rummel (*in the same breath*). Dina, how can you—?

Rörlund. I think it would scarcely be a good thing

for us if such "big things" became the rule here. No, indeed, we ought to be only too thankful that things are as they are in this country. It is true enough that tares grow up amongst our wheat here too, alas; but we do our best conscientiously to weed them out as well as we are able. The important thing is to keep society pure, ladies—to ward off all the hazardous experiments that a restless age seeks to force upon us.

Mrs. Holt. And there are more than enough of them in the wind, unhappily.

Mrs. Rummel. Yes, you know last year we only by a hair's breadth escaped the project of having a railway here.

Mrs. Bernick. Ah, my husband prevented that.

Rörlund. Providence, Mrs. Bernick. You may be certain that your husband was the instrument of a higher Power when he refused to have anything to do with the scheme.

Mrs. Bernick. And yet they said such horrible things about him in the newspapers! But we have quite forgotten to thank you, Mr. Rörlund. It is really more than friendly of you to sacrifice so much of your time to us.

Rörlund. Not at all. This is holiday time, and—

Mrs. Bernick. Yes, but it is a sacrifice all the same, Mr. Rörlund.

Rörlund (*drawing his chair nearer*). Don't speak of it, my dear lady. Are you not all of you making some sacrifice in a good cause?—and that willingly and gladly? These poor fallen creatures for whose rescue we are working may be compared to soldiers wounded on the field of battle; you, ladies, are the kind-hearted sisters of mercy who prepare the lint for these stricken ones, lay the bandages softly on their wounds, heal them and cure them—

Mrs. Bernick. It must be a wonderful gift to be able to see everything in such a beautiful light.

Rörlund. A good deal of it is inborn in one—but it can be to a great extent acquired, too. All that is needful is to see things in the light of a serious mission in life. (*To* MARTHA.:) What do you say, Miss

Bernick? Have you not felt as if you were standing on firmer ground since you gave yourself up to your school work?

Martha. I really do not know what to say. There are times, when I am in the schoolroom down there, that I wish I were far away out on the stormy seas.

Rörlund. That is merely temptation, dear Miss Bernick. You ought to shut the doors of your mind upon such disturbing guests as that. By the "stormy seas"—for of course you do not intend me to take your words literally—you mean the restless tide of the great outer world, where so many are shipwrecked. Do you really set such store on the life you hear rushing by outside? Only look out into the street. There they go, walking about in the heat of the sun, perspiring and tumbling about over their little affairs. No, we undoubtedly have the best of it, who are able to sit here in the cool and turn our backs on the quarter from which disturbance comes.

Martha. Yes, I have no doubt you are perfectly right—

Rörlund. And in a house like this—in a good and pure home, where family life shows in its fairest colours—where peace and harmony rule—. (*To* MRS. BERNICK:) What are you listening to, Mrs. Bernick?

Mrs. Bernick (*who has turned towards the door of* BERNICK'S *room*). They are talking very loud in there.

Rörlund. Is there anything particular going on?

Mrs. Bernick. I don't know. I can hear that there is somebody with my husband.

(HILMAR TÖNNESEN, *smoking a cigar, appears in the doorway on the right, but stops short at the sight of the company of ladies.*)

Hilmar. Oh, excuse me—. (*Turns to go back.*)

Mrs. Bernick. No, Hilmar, come along in; you are not disturbing us. Do you want something?

Hilmar. No, I only wanted to look in here.—Good morning, ladies. (*To* MRS BERNICK:) Well, what is the result?

Mrs. Bernick. Of what?

Hilmar. Karsten has summoned a meeting, you know.

Mrs. Bernick. Has he? What about?

Hilmar. Oh, it is this railway nonsense over again.

Mrs. Rummel. Is it possible?

Mrs. Bernick. Poor Karsten, is he to have more annoyance over that?

Rörlund. But how do you explain that, Mr. Tönnesen? You know that last year Mr. Bernick made it perfectly clear that he would not have a railway here.

Hilmar. Yes, that is what I thought, too; but I met Krap, his confidential clerk, and he told me that the railway project had been taken up again, and that Mr. Bernick was in consultation with three of our local capitalists.

Mrs. Rummel. Ah, I was right in thinking I heard my husband's voice.

Hilmar. Of course Mr. Rummel is in it, and so are Sandstad and Michael Vigeland—"Saint Michael," as they call him.

Rörlund. Ahem!

Hilmar. I beg your pardon, Mr. Rörlund?

Mrs. Bernick. Just when everything was so nice and peaceful.

Hilmar. Well, as far as I am concerned, I have not the slighest objection to their beginning their squabbling again. It will be a little diversion, any way.

Rörlund. I think we can dispense with that sort of diversion.

Hilmar. It depends how you are constituted. Certain natures feel the lust of battle now and then. But unfortunately life in a country town does not offer much in that way, and it isn't given to every one to—(*turns the leaves of the book* RÖRLUND *has been reading*). "Woman as the Handmaid of Society." What sort of drivel is this?

Mrs. Bernick. My dear Hilmar, you must not say that. You certainly have not read the book.

Hilmar. No, and I have no intention of reading it, either.

Mrs. Bernick. Surely you are not feeling quite well to-day.

Hilmar. No, I am not.

Mrs. Bernick. Perhaps you did not sleep well last night?

Hilmar. No, I slept very badly. I went for a walk yesterday evening for my health's sake; and I finished up at the club and read a book about a Polar expedition. There is something bracing in following the adventures of men who are battling with the elements.

Mrs. Rummel. But it does not appear to have done you much good, Mr. Tönnesen.

Hilmar. No, it certainly did not. I lay all night tossing about, only half asleep, and dreamt that I was being chased by a hideous walrus.

Olaf (*who meanwhile has come up the steps from the garden*). Have you been chased by a walrus, uncle?

Hilmar. I 'reamt it, you duffer! Do you mean to say you are still playing about with that ridiculous bow? Why don't you get hold of a real gun?

Olaf. I should like to, but—

Hilmar. There is some sense in a thing like that; it is always an excitement every time you fire it off.

Olaf. And then I could shoot bears, uncle. But daddy won't let me.

Mrs. Bernick. You really mustn't put such ideas into his head, Hilmar.

Hilmar. Hm!—it's a nice breed we are educating up now-a-days, isn't it! We *talk* a great deal about manly sports, goodness knows—but we only play with the question, all the same; there is never any serious inclination for the bracing discipline that lies in facing danger manfully. Don't stand pointing your cross-bow at me, blockhead—it might go off.

Olaf. No, uncle, there is no arrow in it.

Hilmar. You don't know that there isn't—there may be, all the same. Take it away, I tell you!—Why on earth have you never gone over to America on one of your father's ships? You might have seen a buffalo hunt then, or a fight with Red Indians.

Mrs. Bernick. Oh, Hilmar—!

Olaf. I should like that awfully, uncle; and then perhaps I might meet Uncle Johan and Aunt Lona.

Hilmar. Hm!—Rubbish.

Mrs. Bernick. You can go down into the garden again now, Olaf.

Olaf. Mother, may I go out into the street too?

Mrs. Bernick. Yes, but not too far, mind.

(OLAF *runs down into the garden and out through the gate in the fence.*)

Rörlund. You ought not to put such fancies into the child's head, Mr. Tönnesen.

Hilmar. No, of course he is destined to be a miserable stay-at-home, like so many others.

Rörlund. But why do you not take a trip over there yourself?

Hilmar. I? With my wretched health? Of course I get no consideration on that account. But putting that out of the question, you forget that one has certain obligations to perform towards the community of which one forms a part. There must be *some one* here to hold aloft the banner of the Ideal.—Ugh, there he is shouting again!

The Ladies. Who is shouting?

Hilmar. I am sure I don't know. They are raising their voices so loud in there that it gets on my nerves.

Mrs. Bernick. I expect it is my husband, Mr. Tönnesen. But you must remember he is so accustomed to addressing large audiences—

Rörlund. I should not call the others low-voiced, either.

Hilmar. Good Lord, no!—not on any question that touches their pockets. Everything here ends in these petty material considerations. Ugh!

Mrs. Bernick. Any way, that is a better state of things than it used to be when everything ended in mere frivolity.

Mrs. Lynge. Used things really to be as bad as that here?

Mrs. Rummel. Indeed they were, Mrs. Lynge. You may think yourself lucky that you did not live here then.

Mrs. Holt. Yes, times have changed, and no mistake. When I look back to the days when I was a girl—

Mrs. Rummel. Oh, you need not look back more than fourteen or fifteen years. God forgive us, what a life we led! There used to be a Dancing Society and a Musical Society—

Mrs. Bernick. And the Dramatic Club. I remember it very well.

Mrs. Rummel. Yes, that was where your play was performed, Mr. Tönnesen.

Hilmar (*from the back of the room*). What, what?

Rörlund. A play by Mr. Tönnesen?

Mrs. Rummel. Yes, it was long before you came here, Mr. Rörlund. And it was only performed once.

Mrs. Lynge. Was that not the play in which you told me you took the part of a young man's sweetheart, Mrs. Rummel?

Mrs. Rummel (*glancing towards* RÖRLUND). I? I really cannot remember, Mrs. Lynge. But I remember well all the riotous gaiety that used to go on.

Mrs. Holt. Yes, there were houses I could name in which two large dinner-parties were given in one week.

Mrs. Lynge. And surely I have heard that a touring theatrical company came here, too?

Mrs. Rummel. Yes, that was the worst thing of the lot—

Mrs. Holt (*uneasily*). Ahem!

Mrs. Rummel. Did you say a theatrical company? No, I don't remember that at all.

Mrs. Lynge. Oh yes, and I have been told they played all sorts of mad pranks. What is really the truth of those stories?

Mrs. Rummel. There is practically no truth in them, Mrs. Lynge.

Mrs. Holt. Dina, my love, will you give me that linen?

Mrs. Bernick (*at the same time*). Dina, dear, will you go and ask Katrine to bring us our coffee?

Martha. I will go with you, Dina.

(DINA *and* MARTHA *go out by the farther door on the left.*)

Mrs. Bernick (*getting up*). Will you excuse me for a few minutes? I think we will have our coffee outside. (*She goes out to the verandah and sets to work to lay a table.* RÖRLUND *stands in the doorway talking to her.* HILMAR *sits outside, smoking.*)

Mrs. Rummel (*in a low voice*). My goodness, Mrs. Lynge, how you frightened me!

Mrs. Lynge. I?

Mrs. Holt. Yes, but you know it was you that began it, Mrs. Rummel.

Mrs. Rummel. I? How can you say such a thing, Mrs. Holt? Not a syllable passed my lips!

Mrs. Lynge. But what does it all mean?

Mrs. Rummel. What made you begin to talk about—? Think—did you not see that Dina was in the room?

Mrs. Lynge. Dina? Good gracious, is there anything wrong with—?

Mrs. Holt. And in this house, too! Did you not know it was Mrs. Bernick's brother—?

Mrs. Lynge. What about him? I know nothing about it at all; I am quite new to the place, you know.

Mrs. Rummel. Have you not heard that—? Ahem! (*To her daughter.*) Hilda, dear, you can go for a little stroll in the garden.

Mrs. Holt. You go too, Netta. And be very kind to poor Dina when she comes back. (HILDA *and* NETTA *go out into the garden.*)

Mrs. Lynge. Well, what about Mrs. Bernick's brother?

Mrs. Rummel. Don't you know the dreadful scandal about him?

Mrs. Lynge. A dreadful scandal about Mr. Tönnesen?

Mrs. Rummel. Good Heavens, no. Mr. Tönnesen is her cousin, of course, Mrs. Lynge. I am speaking of her brother——

Mrs. Holt. The wicked Mr. Tönnesen—

Mrs. Rummel. His name was Johan. He ran away to America.

Mrs. Holt. Had to run away, you must understand.

Mrs. Lynge. Then it is he the scandal is about?

Mrs. Rummel. Yes; there was something—how shall I put it?—there was something of some kind between him and Dina's mother. I remember it all as if it were yesterday. Johan Tönnesen was in old Mrs. Bernick's office then; Karsten Bernick had just come back from Paris—he had not yet become engaged—

Mrs. Lynge. Yes, but what was the scandal?

Mrs. Rummel. Well, you must know that Möller's company were acting in the town that winter——

Mrs. Holt. And Dorf, the actor, and his wife were in the company. All the young men in the town were infatuated with her.

Mrs. Rummel. Yes, goodness knows how they could think *her* pretty. Well, Dorf came home late one evening——

Mrs. Holt. Quite unexpectedly.

Mrs. Rummel. And found his—. No, really it isn't a thing one can talk about.

Mrs. Holt. After all, Mrs. Rummel, he didn't find anything, because the door was locked on the inside.

Mrs. Rummel. Yes, that is just what I was going to say—he found the door locked. And—just think of it—the man that was in the house had to jump out of the window.

Mrs. Holt. Right down from an attic window.

Mrs. Lynge. And that was Mrs. Bernick's brother?

Mrs. Rummel. Yes, it was he.

Mrs. Lynge. And that was why he ran away to America?

Mrs. Holt. Yes, he had to run away, you may be sure.

Mrs. Rummel. Because something was discovered afterwards that was nearly as bad; just think—he had been making free with the cash-box—

Mrs. Holt. But, you know, no one was certain of that, Mrs. Rummel; perhaps there was no truth in the rumour.

Mrs. Rummel. Well, I must say—! Wasn't it known all over the town? Did not old Mrs. Bernick nearly go bankrupt as the result of it? How-

ever, God forbid *I* should be the one to spread such reports.

Mrs. Holt. Well, anyway, Mrs. Dorf didn't get the money, because she—

Mrs. Lynge. Yes, what happened to Dina's parents afterwards?

Mrs. Rummel. Well, Dorf deserted both his wife and his child. But madam was impudent enough to stay here a whole year. Of course she had not the face to appear at the theatre any more, but she kept herself by taking in washing and sewing—

Mrs. Holt. And then she tried to set up a dancing school.

Mrs. Rummel. Naturally that was no good. What parents would trust their children to such a woman? But it did not last very long. The fine madam was not accustomed to work; she got something wrong with her lungs and died of it.

Mrs. Lynge. What a horrible scandal!

Mrs. Rummel. Yes, you can imagine how hard it was upon the Bernicks. It is the dark spot among the sunshine of their good fortune, as Rummel once put it. So never speak about it in this house, Mrs. Lynge.

Mrs. Holt. And for heaven's sake never mention the step-sister, either!

Mrs. Lynge. Oh, so Mrs. Bernick has a step-sister, too?

Mrs. Rummel. Had, luckily; for the relationship between them is all over now. She was an extraordinary person too! Would you believe it, she cut her hair short, and used to go about in men's boots in bad weather!

Mrs. Holt. And when her step-brother—the black sheep—had gone away, and the whole town naturally was talking about him—what do you think she did? She went out to America to him!

Mr. Rummel. Yes, but remember the scandal *she* caused before she went, Mrs. Holt!

Mrs. Holt. Hush, don't speak of it.

Mrs. Lynge. My goodness, did she create a scandal too?

Mrs. Rummel. I think you ought to hear it, Mrs. Lynge. Mr. Bernick had just got engaged to Betty Tönnesen, and the two of them went arm in arm into her aunt's room to tell her the news——

Mrs. Holt. The Tönnesens' parents were dead, you know——

Mrs. Rummel. When, suddenly, up got Lona Hessel from her chair and gave our refined and well-bred Karsten Bernick such a box on the ear that his head swam.

Mrs. Lynge. Well, I am sure I never—

Mrs. Holt. It is absolutely true.

Mrs. Rummel. And then she packed her box and went away to America.

Mrs. Lynge. I suppose she had had her eye on him for herself.

Mrs. Rummel. Of course she had. She imagined that he and she would make a match of it when he came back from Paris.

Mrs. Holt. The idea of her thinking such a thing! Karsten Bernick—a man of the world and the pink of courtesy—a perfect gentleman—the darling of all the ladies—

Mrs. Rummel. And, with it all, such an excellent young man, Mrs. Holt—so moral.

Mrs. Lynge. But what has this Miss Hessel made of herself in America?

Mrs. Rummel. Well, you see, over that (as my husband once put it) has been drawn a veil which one should hesitate to lift.

Mrs. Lynge. What do you mean?

Mrs. Rummel. She no longer has any connection with the family, as you may suppose; but this much the whole town knows, that she has sung for money in drinking saloons over there——

Mrs. Holt. And has given lectures in public——

Mrs. Rummel. And has published some mad kind of book.

Mrs. Lynge. You don't say so!

Mrs. Rummel. Yes, it is true enough that Lona Hessel is one of the spots on the sun of the Bernick

family's good fortune. Well, now you know the whole story, Mrs. Lynge. I am sure I would never have spoken about it except to put you on your guard.

Mrs. Lynge. Oh, you may be sure I shall be most careful. But that poor child Dina Dorf! I am truly sorry for her.

Mrs. Rummel. Well, really it was a stroke of good luck for her. Think what it would have meant if she had been brought up by such parents! Of course we did our best for her, every one of us, and gave her all the good advice we could. Eventually Miss Bernick got her taken into this house.

Mrs. Holt. But she has always been a difficult child to deal with. It is only natural—with all the bad example she had had before her. A girl of that sort is not like one of our own; one must be lenient with her.

Mrs. Rummel. Hush—here she comes. (*In a louder voice.*) Yes, Dina is really a clever girl. Oh, is that you, Dina? We are just putting away the things.

Mrs. Holt. How delicious your coffee smells, my dear Dina. A nice cup of coffee like that—.

Mrs. Bernick (*calling in from the verandah*). Will you come out here? (*Meanwhile* MARTHA *and* DINA *have helped the Maid to bring out the coffee. All the ladies seat themselves on the verandah, and talk with a great show of kindness to* DINA. *In a few moments* DINA *comes back into the room and looks for her sewing.*

Mrs. Bernick (*from the coffee table*). Dina, won't you—?

Dina. No, thank you. (*Sits down to her sewing.* MRS. BERNICK *and* RÖRLUND *exchange a few words; a moment afterwards he comes back into the room makes a pretext for going up to the table, and begins speaking to* DINA *in low tones.*)

Rörlund. Dina.

Dina. Yes?

Rörlund. Why don't you want to sit with the others?

Dina. When I came in with the coffee, I could see

from the strange lady's face that they had been talking about me.

Rörlund. But did you not see as well how agreeable she was to you out there?

Dina. That is just what I will not stand!

Rörlund. You are very self-willed, Dina.

Dina. Yes.

Rörlund. But why?

Dina. Because it is my nature.

Rörlund. Could you not try to alter your nature?

Dina. No.

Rörlund. Why not?

Dina (*looking at him*). Because I am one of the "poor fallen creatures," you know.

Rörlund. For shame, Dina.

Dina. So was my mother.

Rörlund. Who has spoken to you about such things?

Dina. No one; they never do. Why don't they? They all handle me in such a gingerly fashion, as if they thought I should go to pieces if they—. Oh, how I hate all this kind-heartedness.

Rörlund. My dear Dina, I can quite understand that you feel repressed here, but—

Dina. Yes; if only I could get right away from here. I could make my own way quite well, if only I did not live amongst people who are so—so—

Rörlund. So what?

Dina. So proper and so moral.

Rörlund. Oh but, Dina, you don't mean that.

Dina. You know quite well in what sense I mean it. Hilda and Netta come here every day, to be exhibited to me as good examples. I can never be so beautifully behaved as they; I don't *want* to be. If only I were right away from it all, I should grow to be worth something.

Rörlund. But you are worth a great deal, Dina dear.

Dina. What good does that do me here?

Rörlund. Get right away, you say? Do you mean it seriously?

Dina. I would not stay here a day longer, if it were not for you.

Rörlund. Tell me, Dina—why is it that you are fond of being with me?

Dina. Because you teach me so much that is beautiful.

Rörlund. Beautiful? Do you call the little I can teach you, beautiful?

Dina. Yes. Or perhaps, to be accurate, it is not that you teach me anything; but when I listen to you talking I see beautiful visions.

Rörlund. What do you mean exactly when you call a thing beautiful?

Dina. I have never thought it out.

Rörlund. Think it out now, then. What do you understand by a beautiful thing?

Dina. A beautiful thing is something that is great—and far off.

Rörlund. Hm!—Dina, I am so deeply concerned about you, my dear.

Dina. Only that?

Rörlund. You know perfectly well that you are dearer to me than I can say.

Dina. If I were Hilda or Netta, you would not be afraid to let people see it.

Rörlund. Ah, Dina, you can have no idea of the number of things I am forced to take into consideration. When it is a man's lot to be a moral pillar of the community he lives in, he cannot be too circumspect. If only I could be certain that people would interpret my motives properly—. But no matter for that; you must, and shall be, helped to raise yourself. Dina, is it a bargain between us that when I come—when circumstances allow me to come—to you and say: "Here is my hand," you will take it and be my wife? Will you promise me that, Dina?

Dina. Yes.

Rörlund. Thank you, thank you! Because for my part, too—oh, Dina, I love you so dearly. Hush! Some one is coming. Dina—for my sake—go out to the others. *(She goes out to the coffee table. At the same moment* RUMMEL, SANDSTAD *and* VIGELAND *come*

out of BERNICK'S *room, followed by Bernick, who has a bundle of papers in his hand.*)

Bernick. Well, then, the matter is settled.

Vigeland. Yes, I hope to goodness it is.

Rummel. It is settled, Bernick. A Norseman's word stands as firm as the rocks on Dovrefjeld, you know!

Bernick. And no one must falter, no one give way, no matter what opposition we meet with.

Rummel. We will stand or fall together, Bernick.

Hilmar (*coming in from the verandah*). Fall? If I may ask, isn't it the railway scheme that is going to fall?

Bernick. No, on the contrary, it is going to proceed—

Rummel. Full steam, Mr. Tönnesen.

Hilmar (*coming nearer*). Really?

Rörlund. How is that?

Mrs. Bernick (*at the verandah door*). Karsten, dear, what is it that—?

Bernick. My dear Betty, how can it interest you? (*To the three men.*) We must get out lists of subscribers, and the sooner the better. Obviously our four names must head the list. The positions we occupy in the community makes it our duty to make ourselves as prominent as possible in the affair.

Sandstad. Obviously, Mr. Bernick.

Rummel. The town hall go through, Bernick; I swear it shall!

Bernick. Oh, I have not the least anticipation of failure. We must see that we work, each one among the circle of his own acquaintances; and if we can point to the fact that the scheme is exciting a lively interst in all ranks of society, then it stands to reason that our Municipal Corporation will have to contribute its share.

Mrs. Bernick. Karsten, you really must come out here and tell us—

Bernick. My dear Betty, it is an affair that does not concern ladies at all.

Hilmar. Then you are really going to support this railway scheme after all?

Bernick. Yes, naturally.

Rörlund. But last year, Mr. Bernick—

Bernick. Last year it was quite another thing. At that time it was a question of a line along the coast——

Vigeland. Which would have been quite superfluous, Mr. Rörlund; because, of course, we have our steamboat service——

Sandstad. And would have been quite unreasonably costly——

Rummel. Yes, and would have absolutely ruined certain important interests in the town.

Bernick. The main point was that it would not have been to the advantage of the community as a whole. That is why I opposed it, with the result that the inland line was resolved upon.

Hilmar. Yes, but surely that will not touch the towns about here.

Bernick. It will eventually touch *our* town, my dear Hilmar, because we are going to build a branch line here.

Hilmar. Aha—a new scheme, then?

Rummel. Yes, isn't it a capital scheme? What?

Rörlund. Hm!—

Vigeland. There is no denying that it looks as though Providence had just planned the configuration of the country to suit a branch line.

Rörlund. Do you really mean it, Mr. Vigeland?

Bernick. Yes, I must confess it seems to me as if it had been the hand of Providence that caused me to take a journey on business this spring, in the course of which I happened to traverse a valley through which I had never been before. It came across my mind like a flash of lightning that this was where we could carry a branch line down to our town. I got an engineer to survey the neighbourhood, and have here the provisional calculations and estimate; so there is nothing to hinder us.

Mrs. Bernick (who is still with the other ladies at the verandah door). But, my dear Karsten, to think that you should have kept it all a secret from us!

Bernick. Ah, my dear Betty, I knew you would not

have been able to grasp the exact situation. Besides, I have not mentioned it to a living soul till to-day. But now the decisive moment has come, and we must work openly and with all our might. Yes, even if I have to risk all I have for its sake, I mean to push the matter through.

Rummel. And we will back you up, Bernick; you may rely upon that.

Rörlund. Do you really promise us so much, then, from this undertaking, gentlemen?

Bernick. Yes, undoubtedly. Think what a lever it will be to raise the status of our whole community. Just think of the immense tracts of forest-land that it will make accessible; think of all the rich deposits of minerals we shall be able to work; think of the river with one waterfall above another! Think of the possibilities that open out in the way of manufactories!

Rörlund. And are you not afraid that an easier intercourse with the depravity of the outer world—?

Bernick. No, you may make your mind quite easy on that score, Mr. Rörlund. Our little hive of industry rests now-a-days, God be thanked, on such a sound moral basis; we have all of us helped to drain it, if I may use the expression; and that we will continue to do, each in his degree. You, Mr. Rörlund, will continue your richly blessed activity in our schools and our homes. We, the practical men of business, will be the support of the community by extending its welfare within as wide a radius as possible; and our women—yes, come nearer, ladies, you will like to hear it—our women, I say, our wives and daughters—you, ladies, will work on undisturbed in the service of charity, and moreover will be a help and a comfort to your nearest and dearest, as my dear Betty and Martha are to me and Olaf—. (*Looks round him.*) Where is Olaf to-day?

Mrs. Bernick. Oh, in the holidays it is impossible to keep him at home.

Bernick. I have no doubt he is down at the shore again. You will see he will end by coming to some harm there.

Hilmar. Bah! A little sport with the forces of nature—

Mrs. Rummel. Your family affection is beautiful, Mr. Bernick!

Bernick. Well, the family is the kernel of society. A good home, honoured and trusty friends, a little snug family circle where no disturbing elements can cast their shadow—. (KRAP *comes in from the right, bringing letters and papers.*)

Krap. The foreign mail, Mr. Bernick—and a telegram from New York.

Bernick (*taking the telegram*). Ah—from the owners of the "Indian Girl."

Rummel. Is the mail in? Oh, then you must excuse me.

Vigeland. And me too.

Sandstad. Good day, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. Good day, good day, gentlemen. And remember, we have a meeting this afternoon at five o'clock.

The Three Men. Yes—quite so—of course. (*They go out to the right.*)

Bernick (*who has read the telegram*). This is thoroughly American! Absolutely shocking!

Mrs. Bernick. Good gracious, Karsten, what is it?

Bernick. Look at this, Krap! Read it!

Krap (*reading*). "Do the least repairs possible. Send over 'Indian Girl' as soon as she is ready to sail; good time of year; at a pinch her cargo will keep her afloat." Well, I must say—

Rörlund. You see the state of things in these vaunted great communities!

Bernick. You are quite right; not a moment's consideration for human life, when it is a question of making a profit. (*To* KRAP:) Can the "Indian Girl" go to sea in four—or five—days?

Krap. Yes, if Mr. Vigeland will agree to our stopping work on the "Palm Tree" meanwhile.

Bernick. Hm—he won't. Well, be so good as to look through the letters. And look here, did you see Olaf down at the quay?

Krap. No, Mr. Bernick. (*Goes into* BERNICK'S *room.*)

Bernick (*looking at the telegram again*). These gentlemen think nothing of risking eight men's lives—

Hilmar. Well, it is a sailor's calling to brave the elements; it must be a fine tonic to the nerves to be like that, with only a thin plank between one and the abyss—

Bernick. I should like to see the ship-owner amongst us who would condescend to such a thing! There is not one that would do it—not a single one! (*Sees* OLAF *coming up to the house.*) Ah, thank Heaven, here he is, safe and sound. (OLAF, *with a fishing-line in his hand, comes running up the garden and in through the verandah.*)

Olaf. Uncle Hilmar, I have been down and seen the steamer.

Bernick. Have you been down to the quay again?

Olaf. No, I have only been out in a boat. But just think, Uncle Hilmar, a whole circus company has come on shore, with horses and animals; and there were such lots of passengers.

Mrs. Rummel. No, are we really to have a circus?

Rörlund. We? I certainly have no desire to see it.

Mrs. Rummel. No, of course I don't mean *we*, but—

Dina. I should like to see a circus very much.

Olaf. So should I.

Hilmar. You are a duffer. Is that anything to see? Mere tricks. No, it would be something quite different to see the Gaucho careering over the Pampas on his snorting mustang. But, Heaven help us, in these wretched little towns of ours—

Olaf (*pulling at* MARTHA'S *dress*). Look, Aunt Martha! Look, there they come!

Mrs. Holt. Good Lord, yes—here they come.

Mrs. Lynge. Ugh, what horrid people!

(*A number of passengers and a whole crowd of townsfolk are seen coming up the street.*)

Mrs. Rummel. They *are* a set of mountebanks, certainly. Just look at that woman in the grey dress, Mrs. Holt—the one with a knapsack over her shoulder.

Mrs. Holt. Yes — look — she has slung it on the handle of her parasol. The manager's wife, I expect.

Mrs. Rummel. And there is the manager himself, no doubt. He looks a regular pirate. Don't look at him, Hilda!

Mrs. Holt. Nor you, Netta!

Olaf. Mother, the manager is bowing to us.

Bernick. What?

Mrs. Bernick. What are you saying, child?

Mrs. Rummel. Yes, and—good Heavens—the woman is bowing to us too.

Bernick. That is a little *too* cool!

Martha (*exclaims involuntarily*). Ah—!

Mrs. Bernick. What is it, Martha?

Martha. Nothing, nothing. I thought for a moment—

Olaf (*shrieking with delight*). Look, look, there are the rest of them, with the horses and animals! And there are the Americans, too! All the sailors from the "Indian Girl"! (*The strains of "Yankee Doodle," played on a clarinet and a drum, are heard.*)

Hilmar (*stopping his ears*). Ugh, ugh, ugh!

Rörlund. I think we ought to withdraw ourselves from sight a little, ladies; we have nothing to do with such goings on. Let us go to our work again.

Mrs. Bernick. Do you think we had better draw the curtains?

Rörlund. Yes, that was exactly what I meant.

(*The ladies resume their places at the work-table;* RÖRLUND *shuts the verandah door, and draws the curtains over it and over the windows, so that the room becomes half dark.*)

Olaf (*peeping out through the curtains*). Mother, the manager's wife is standing by the fountain now, washing her face.

Mrs. Bernick. What? In the middle of the market-place?

Mrs. Rummel. And in broad daylight, too!

Hilmar. Well, I must say if I were travelling across a desert waste and found myself beside a well, I am

sure I should not stop to think whether—. Ugh, that frightful clarinet!

Rörlund. It is really high time the police interfered.

Bernick. Oh no; we must not be too hard on foreigners. Of course these folk have none of the deep-seated instincts of decency which restrain us within proper bounds. Suppose they do behave outrageously, what does it concern us? Fortunately this spirit of disorder, that flies in the face of all that is customary and right, is absolutely a stranger to our community, if I may say so—. What is this! (LONA HESSEL *walks briskly in from the door on the right.*)

The Ladies (*in low, frightened tones*). The circus woman! The manager's wife!

Mrs. Bernick. Heavens, what does this mean!

Martha (*jumping up*). Ah—!

Lona. How do you do, Betty dear! How do you do, Martha! How do you do, brother-in-law!

Mrs. Bernick (*with a cry*). Lona—!

Bernick (*stumbling backwards*). As sure as I am alive—!

Mrs. Holt. Mercy on us—!

Mrs. Rummel. It cannot possibly be—!

Hilmar. Well! Ugh!

Mrs. Bernick. Lona—! Is it really—?

Lona. Really me? Yes, indeed it is; you may fall on my neck if you like.

Hilmar. Ugh, ugh!

Mrs. Bernick. And coming back here as—?

Mrs. Bernick. And actually mean to appear in—?

Lona. Appear? Appear in what?

Bernick. Well, I mean—in the circus—

Lona. Ha, ha, ha! Are you mad, brother-in-law? Do you think I belong to the circus troupe? No; certainly I have turned my hand to a good many things, and made a fool of myself in a good many ways—

Mrs. Rummel. Hm!—

Lona. But I have never tried circus riding.

Bernick. Then you are not—?

Mrs. Bernick. Thank Heaven!

Lona. No, we travelled like other respectable folk—second-class, certainly, but we are accustomed to that.

Mrs. Bernick. We, did you say?

Bernick (*taking a step forward*). Whom do you mean by "we"?

Lona. I and the child, of course.

The Ladies (*with a cry*). The child!

Hilmar. What!

Rörlund. I really must say—!

Mrs. Bernick. But what do you mean, Lona?

Lona. I mean John, of course; I have no other child, as far as I know, but John—or Johan, as you used to call him.

Mrs. Bernick. Johan!

Mrs. Rummel (*in an undertone, to* MRS. LYNGE). The scapegrace brother!

Bernick (*hesitatingly*). Is Johan with you?

Lona. Of course he is; I certainly would not come without him. Why do you look so tragical? And why are you sitting here in the gloom, sewing white things? There has not been a death in the family, has there?

Rörlund. Madam, you find yourself in the Society for Fallen Women—

Lona (*half to herself*). What? Can these nice, quiet-looking ladies possibly be—?

Mrs. Rummel. Well, really—!

Lona. Oh, I understand! But, bless my soul, that is surely Mrs. Rummel? And Mrs. Holt sitting there too! Well, we three have not grown younger since the last time we met. But listen now, good people; let the Fallen Women wait for a day—they will be none the worse for that. A joyful occasion like this—

Rörlund. A home-coming is not always a joyful occasion.

Lona. Indeed? How do you read your Bible, Mr. Parson?

Rörlund. I am not a parson.

Lona. Oh, you will grow into one, then. But—faugh!—this moral linen of yours smells tainted—just

like a winding-sheet. I am accustomed to the air of the prairies, let me tell you.

Bernick (*wiping his forehead*). Yes, it certainly is rather close in here.

Lona. Wait a moment; we will resurrect ourselves from this vault. (*Pulls the curtains to one side.*) We must have broad daylight in here when the boy comes. Ah, you will see a boy there that has washed himself—

Hilmar. Ugh!

Lona (*opening the verandah door and window*). I should say, *when* he has washed himself, up at the hotel—for on the boat he got piggishly dirty.

Hilmar. Ugh, ugh!

Lona. Ugh? Why, surely isn't that—? (*Points at* HILDAR *and asks the others:*) Is *he* still loafing about here saying "Ugh"?

Hilmar. I do not loaf; it is the state of my health that keeps me here.

Rörlund. Ahem! Ladies, I do not think—

Lona (*who has noticed* OLAF). Is he yours, Betty? Give me a paw, my boy! Or are you afraid of your ugly old aunt?

Rörlund (*putting his book under his arm*). Ladies, I do not think any of us is in the mood for any more work to-day. I suppose we are to meet again to-morrow?

Lona (*while the others are getting up and taking their leave*). Yes, let us. I shall be on the spot.

Rörlund. You? Pardon me, Miss Hessel, but what do you propose to do in *our* Society?

Lona. I will let some fresh air into it, Mr. Parson.

ACT II

(SCENE.—*The same room.* MRS. BERNICK *is sitting alone at the work-table, sewing.* BERNICK *comes in from the right, wearing his hat and gloves and carrying a stick.*)

Mrs. Bernick. Home already, Karsten?

Bernick. Yes, I have made an appointment with a man.

Mrs. Bernick (*with a sigh*). Oh yes, I suppose Johan is coming up here again.

Bernick. With a *man,* I said. (*Lays down his hat.*) What has become of all the ladies to-day?

Mrs. Bernick. Mrs. Rummel and Hilda hadn't time to come.

Bernick. Oh!—did they send any excuse?

Mrs. Bernick. Yes, they had so much to do at home.

Bernick. Naturally. And of course the others are not coming either?

Mrs. Bernick. No, something has prevented them to-day, too.

Bernick. I could have told you that, beforehand. Where is Olaf?

Mrs. Bernick. I let him go out a little with Dina.

Bernick. Hm—she is a giddy little baggage. Did you see how she at once started making a fuss of Johan yesterday?

Mrs. Bernick. But, my dear Karsten, you know Dina knows nothing whatever of—

Bernick. No, but in any case Johan ought to have had sufficient tact not to pay her any attention. I saw quite well, from his face, what Vigeland thought of it.

Mrs. Bernick (*laying her sewing down on her lap*). Karsten, can you imagine what his object is in coming here?

Bernick. Well—I know he has a farm over there, and I fancy he is not doing particularly well with it; *she* called attention yesterday to the fact that they were obliged to travel second class—

Mrs. Bernick. Yes, I am afraid it must be something of that sort. But to think of her coming with him! She! After the deadly insult she offered you!

Bernick. Oh, don't think about that ancient history.

Mrs. Bernick. How can I help thinking of it just now? After all, he is my brother—still, it is not on his acount that I am distressed, but because of all the unpleasantness it would mean for you. Karsten, I am so dreadfully afraid—

Bernick. Afraid of what?

Mrs. Bernick. Isn't it possible that they may send him to prison for stealing that money from your mother?

Bernick. What rubbish! Who can prove that the money *was* stolen?

Mrs. Bernick. The whole town knows it, unfortunately; and you know you said yourself—

Bernick. I said nothing. The town knows nothing whatever about the affair; the whole thing was no more than idle rumour.

Mrs. Bernick. How magnanimous you are, Karsten!

Bernick. Do not let us have any more of these reminiscences, please! You don't know how you torture me by raking up all that. (*Walks up and down; then flings his stick away from him.*) And to think of their coming home now—just now, when it is particularly necessary for me that I should stand well in every respect with the town and with the Press. Our newspaper men will be sending paragraphs to the papers in the other towns about here. Whether I receive them well, or whether I receive them ill, it will all be discussed and talked over. They will rake up all those old stories—as you do. In a community like ours—. (*Throws his gloves down on the table.*) And I have not a soul here to whom I can talk about it and to whom I can go for support.

Mrs. Bernick. No one at all, Karsten?

Bernick. No—who is there? And to have them on my shoulders just at this moment! Without a doubt they will create a scandal in some way or another—she, in particular. It is simply a calamity to be connected with such folk in any way!

Mrs. Bernick. Well, *I* can't help their—

Bernick. What can't you help? Their being your relations? No, that is quite true.

Mrs. Bernick. And I did not ask them to come home.

Bernick. That's it—go on! "I did not ask them to come home; I did not write to them; I did not drag them home by the hair of their heads!" Oh, I know the whole rigmarole by heart.

Mrs. Bernick (*bursting into tears*). You need not be so unkind—

Bernick. Yes, that's right—begin to cry, so that our neighbours may have that to gossip about too. Do stop being so foolish, Betty. Go and sit outside; some one may come in here. I don't suppose you want people to see the lady of the house with red eyes? It would be a nice thing, wouldn't it, if the story got about that—. There, I hear some one in the passage. (*A knock is heard at the door.*) Come in! (MRS. BERNICK *takes her sewing and goes out down the garden steps.* AUNE *comes in from the right.*)

Aune. Good-morning, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. Good-morning. Well, I suppose you can guess what I want you for?

Aune. Mr. Krap told me yesterday that you were not pleased with—

Bernick. I am displeased with the whole management of the yard, Aune. The work does not get on as quickly as it ought. The "Palm Tree" ought to have been under sail long ago. Mr. Vigeland comes here every day to complain about it; he is a difficult man to have with one as part owner.

Aune. The "Palm Tree" can go to sea the day after to-morrow.

Bernick. At last. But what about the American ship, the "Indian Girl," which has been laid up here for five weeks and—

Aune. The American ship? I understood that, before everything else, we were to work our hardest to get your own ship ready.

Bernick. I gave you no reason to think so. You ought to have pushed on as fast as possible with the work on the American ship also; but you have not.

Aune. Her bottom is completely rotten, Mr. Bernick; the more we patch it, the worse it gets.

Bernick. That is not the reason. Krap has told me the whole truth. You do not understand how to work the new machines I have provided—or rather, you will not try to work them.

Aune. Mr. Bernick, I am well on in the fifties; and

ever since I was a boy I have been accustomed to the old way of working—

Bernick. We cannot work that way now-a-days. You must not imagine, Aune, that it is for the sake of making profit; I do not need that, fortunately; but I owe consideration to the community I live in, and to the business I am at the head of. I must take the lead in progress, or there would never be any.

Aune. I welcome progress too, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. Yes, for your own limited circle—for the working class. Oh, I know what a busy agitator you are; you make speeches, you stir people up; but when some concrete instance of progress presents itself—as now, in the case of our machines—you do not want to have anything to do with it; you are afraid.

Aune. Yes, I really am afraid, Mr. Bernick. I am afraid for the number of men who will have the bread taken out of their mouths by these machines. You are very fond, sir, of talking about the consideration we owe to the community; it seems to me, however, that the community has its duties too. Why should science and capital venture to introduce these new discoveries into labour, before the community has had time to educate a generation up to using them?

Bernick. You read and think too much, Aune; it does you no good, and that is what makes you dissatisfied with your lot.

Aune. It is not, Mr. Bernick; but I cannot bear to see one good workman dismissed after another, to starve because of these machines.

Bernick. Hm! When the art of printing was discovered, many a quill-driver was reduced to starvation.

Aune. Would you have admired the art so greatly if you had been a quill-driver in those days, sir?

Bernick. I did not send for you to argue with you. I sent for you to tell you that the "Indian Girl" must be ready to put to sea the day after to-morrow.

Aune. But, Mr. Bernick—

Bernick. The day after to-morrow, do you hear?—at the same time as our own ship, not an hour later.

I have good reasons for hurrying on the work. Have you seen to-day's paper? Well, then you know the pranks these American sailors have been up to again. The rascally pack are turning the whole town upside down. Not a night passes without some brawling in the taverns or the streets—not to speak of other abominations.

Aune. Yes, they certainly are a bad lot.

Bernick. And who is it that has to bear the blame for all this disorder? It is I! Yes, it is I who have to suffer for it. These newspaper fellows are making all sorts of covert insinuations because we are devoting all our energies to the "Palm Tree." I, whose task in life it is to influence my fellow-citizens by the force of example, have to endure this sort of thing cast in my face. I am not going to stand that. I have no fancy for having my good name smirched in that way.

Aune. Your name stands high enough to endure that and a great deal more, sir.

Bernick. Not just now. At this particular moment I have need of all the respect and goodwill my fellow-citizens can give me. I have a big undertaking on the stocks, as you probably have heard; but, if it should happen that evil-disposed persons succeeded in shaking the absolute confidence I enjoy, it might land me in the greatest difficulties. That is why I want, at any price, to avoid these shameful innuendoes in the papers, and that is why I name the day after to-morrow as the limit of the time I can give you.

Aune. Mr. Bernick, you might just as well name this afternoon as the limit.

Bernick. You mean that I am asking an impossibility?

Aune. Yes, with the hands we have now at the yard.

Bernick. Very good; then we must look about elsewhere.

Aune. Do you really mean, sir, to discharge still more of your old workmen?

Bernick. No, I am not thinking of that.

Aune. Because I think it would cause bad blood

against you both among the townsfolk and in the papers, if you did that.

Bernick. Very probably; therefore we will not do it. But, if the "Indian Girl" is not ready to sail the day after to-morrow, I shall discharge *you*.

Aune (*with a start*). Me! (*He laughs.*) You are joking, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. I should not be so sure of that, if I were you.

Aune. Do you mean that you can contemplate discharging *me*?—Me, whose father and grandfather worked in your yard all their lives, as I have done myself—?

Bernick. Who is it that is forcing me to do it?

Aune. You are asking what is impossible, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. Oh, where there's a will there's a way. Yes or no; give me a decisive answer, or consider yourself discharged on the spot.

Aune (*coming a step nearer to him*). Mr. Bernick, have you ever realised what discharging an old workman means? You think he can look about for another job? Oh, yes, he can do that; but does that dispose of the matter? You should just be there once, in the house of a workman who has been discharged, the evening, he comes home bringing all his tools with him.

Bernick. Do you think I am discharging you with a light heart? Have I not always been a good master to you?

Aune. So much the worse, Mr. Bernick. Just for that very reason those at home will not blame *you;* they will say nothing to me, because they dare not; but they will look at me when I am not noticing, and think that I must have deserved it. You see, sir, that is—that is what I cannot bear. I am a mere nobody, I know; but I have always been accustomed to stand first in my own home. My humble home is a little community too, Mr. Bernick—a little community which I have been able to support and maintain because my wife has believed in me and because my children have believed in me. And now it is all to fall to pieces.

Bernick. Still, if there is nothing else for it, the lesser must go down before the greater; the individual must be sacrificed to the general welfare. I can give you no other answer; and that, and no other, is the way of the world. You are an obstinate man, Aune! You are opposing me, not because you cannot do otherwise, but because you will not exhibit the superiority of machinery over manual labour.

Aune. And you will not be moved, Mr. Bernick, because you know that if you drive me away you will at all events have given the newspapers proof of your good will.

Bernick. And suppose that were so? I have told you what it means for me—either bringing the Press down on my back, or making them well-disposed to me at a moment when I am working for an object which will mean the advancement of the general welfare. Well, then, can I do otherwise than as I am doing? The question, let me tell you, turns upon this—whether your home is to be supported, as you put it, or whether hundreds of new homes are to be prevented from existing—hundreds of homes that will never be built, never have a fire lighted on their hearth, unless I succeed in carrying through the scheme I am working for now. That is the reason why I have given you your choice.

Aune. Well, if that is the way things stand, I have nothing more to say.

Bernick. Hm—my dear Aune, I am extremely grieved to think that we are to part.

Aune. We are not going to part, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. How is that?

Aune. Even a common man like myself has something he is bound to maintain.

Bernick. Quite so, quite so—then I presume you think you may promise—?

Aune. The "Indian Girl" shall be ready to sail the day after to-morrow. (*Bows and goes out to the right.*)

Bernick. Ah, I have got the better of that obstinate fellow! I take it as a good omen. (HILMAR *comes in through the garden door, smoking a cigar.*)

Hilmar (*as he comes up the steps to the verandah*). Good-morning, Betty! Good-morning, Karsten!

Mrs. Bernick. Good-morning.

Hilmar. Ah, I see you have been crying, so I suppose you know all about it too?

Mrs. Bernick. Know all about what?

Hilmar. That the scandal is in full swing. Ugh!

Bernick. What do you mean?

Hilmar (*coming into the room*). Why, that our two friends from America are displaying themselves about the streets in the company of Dina Dorf.

Mrs. Bernick (*coming in after him*). Hilmar, is it possible?

Hilmar. Yes, unfortunately, it is quite true. Lona was even so wanting in tact as to call after me, but of course I appeared not to have heard her.

Bernick. And no doubt all this has not been unnoticed.

Hilmar. You may well say that. People stood still and looked at them. It spread like wildfire through the town—just like a prairie fire out West. In every house people were at the windows waiting for the procession to pass, cheek by jowl behind the curtains—ugh! Oh, you must excuse me, Betty, for saying "ugh"—this has got on my nerves. If it is going on, I shall be forced to think about getting right away from here.

Mrs. Bernick. But you should have spoken to him and represented to him that—

Hilmar. In the open street? No, excuse me, I could not do that. To think that the fellow should dare to show himself in the town at all! Well, we shall see if the Press doesn't put a stopper on him; yes—forgive me, Betty, but—

Bernick. The Press, do you say? Have you heard a hint of anything of the sort?

Hilmar. There *are* such things flying about. When I left here yesterday evening I looked in at the club, because I did not feel well. I saw at once, from the sudden silence that fell when I went in, that our American couple had been the subject of conversation.

Then that impudent newspaper fellow, Hammer, came in and congratulated me at the top of his voice on the return of my rich cousin.

Bernick. Rich?

Hilmar. Those were his words. Naturally I looked him up and down in the manner he deserved, and gave him to understand that I knew nothing about Johan Tönnesen's being rich. "Really," he said, "that is very remarkable. People usually get on in America when they have something to start with, and I believe your cousin did not go over there quite empty-handed."

Bernick. Hm—now will you oblige me by—

Mrs. Bernick (distressed). There, you see, Karsten—

Hilmar. Anyhow, I have spent a sleepless night because of them. And here he is, walking about the streets as if nothing were the matter. Why couldn't he disappear for good and all? It really is insufferable how hard some people are to kill.

Mrs. Bernick. My dear Hilmar, what are you saying?

Hilmar. Oh, nothing. But here this fellow escapes with a whole skin from railway accidents and fights with Californian grizzlies and Blackfoot Indians—has not even been scalped—. Ugh, here they come!

Bernick (looking down the street). Olaf is with them too!

Hilmar. Of course! They want to remind everybody that they belong to the best family in the town. Look there!—look at the crowd of loafers that have come out of the chemist's to stare at them and make remarks. My nerves really won't stand it; how a man is to be expected to keep the banner of the Ideal flying under such circumstances, I—

Bernick. They are coming here. Listen, Betty; it is my particular wish that you should receive them in the friendliest possible way.

Mrs. Bernick. Oh, may I, Karsten.

Bernick. Certainly, certainly—and you too, Hilmar. It is to be hoped they will not stay here very long; and when we are quite by ourselves—no allusions to the past; we must not hurt their feelings in any way.

Mrs. Bernick. How magnanimous you are, Karsten!

Bernick. Oh, don't speak of that.

Mrs. Bernick. But you must let me thank you; and you must forgive me for being so hasty. I am sure you had every reason to—

Bernick. Don't talk about it, please!

Hilmar. Ugh!

(JOHAN TÖNNESEN *and* DINA *come up through the garden, followed by* LONA *and* OLAF.)

Lona. Good-morning, dear people!

Johan. We hav' been out having a look round the old place, Karsten.

Bernick. So I hear. Greatly altered, is it not?

Lona. Mr. Bernick's great and good works everywhere. We have been up into the Recreation Ground you have presented to the town—

Bernick. Have you been *there?*

Lona. "The gift of Karsten Bernick," as it says over the gateway. You seem to be responsible for the whole place here.

Johan. Splendid ships you have got, too. I met my old schoolfellow, the captain of the "Palm Tree."

Lona. And you have built a new school-house too; and I hear that the town has to thank you for both the gas supply and the water supply.

Bernick. Well, one ought to work for the good of the community one lives in.

Lona. That is an excellent sentiment, brother-in-law; but it is a pleasure, all the same, to see how people appreciate you. I am not vain, I hope; but I could not resist reminding one or two of the people we talked to that we were relations of yours.

Hilmar. Ugh!

Lona. Do you say "ugh" to that?

Hilmar. No, I said "ahem."

Lona. Oh, poor chap, you may say that if you like. But are you all by yourselves to-day?

Bernick. Yes, we are by ourselves to-day.

Lona. Ah, yes, we met a couple of members of your Morality Society up at the market; they made out they were very busy. You and I have never had an oppor-

tunity for a good talk yet. Yesterday you had your three pioneers here, as well as the parson—

Hilmar. The schoolmaster.

Lona. I call him the parson. But now tell me what you think of *my* work during these fifteen years? Hasn't he grown a fine fellow? Who would recognise the madcap that ran away from home?

Hilmar. Hm!

Johan. Now, Lona, don't brag too much about me.

Lona. Well, I can tell you I am precious proud of him. Goodness knows it is about the only thing I have done in my life; but it does give me a sort of right to exist. When I think, Johan, how we two began over there with nothing but our four bare fists—

Hilmar. Hands.

Lona. I say fists; and they were dirty fists—

Hilmar. Ugh!

Lona. And empty, too.

Hilmar. Empty? Well, I must say—

Lona. What must you say?

Bernick. Ahem!

Hilmar. I must say—ugh! (*Goes out through the garden.*)

Lona. What is the matter with the man?

Bernick. Oh, do not take any notice of him; his nerves are rather upset just now. Would you not like to take a look at the garden? You have not been down there yet, and I have got an hour to spare.

Lona. With pleasure. I can tell you my thoughts have been with you in this garden many and many a time.

Mrs. Bernick. We have made a great many alterations there too, as you will see. (BERNICK, MRS. BERNICK, *and* LONA *go down to the garden, where they are visible every now and then during the following scene.*)

Olaf (*coming to the verandah door*). Uncle Hilmar, do you know what uncle Johan asked me? He asked me if I would go to America with him.

Hilmar. You, you duffer, who are tied to your mother's apron strings—!

Olaf. Ah, but I won't be that any longer. You will see, when I grow big—

Hilmar. Oh, fiddlesticks! You have no really serious bent towards the strength of character necessary to—.

(*They go down to the garden.* DINA *meanwhile has taken off her hat and is standing at the door on the right, shaking the dust off her dress.*)

Johan (*to* DINA). The walk has made you pretty warm.

Dina. Yes, it was a splendid walk. I have never had such a splendid walk before.

Johan. Do you not often go for a walk in the morning?

Dina. Oh, yes—but only with Olaf.

Johan. I see.—Would you rather go down into the garden than stay here?

Dina. No, I would rather stay here.

Johan. So would I. Then shall we consider it a bargain that we are to go for a walk like this together every morning?

Dina. No, Mr. Tönnesen, you mustn't do that.

Johan. What mustn't I do? You promised, you know.

Dina. Yes, but—on second thoughts—you mustn't go out with me.

Johan. But why not?

Dina. Of course, you are a stranger—you cannot understand; but I must tell you—

Johan. Well?

Dina. No, I would rather not talk about it.

Johan. Oh, but you must; you can talk to me about whatever you like.

Dina. Well, I must tell you that I am not like the other young girls here. There is something—something or other about me. That is why you mustn't.

Johan. But I do not understand anything about it. You have not done anything wrong?

Dina. No, not I, but—. No, I am not going to talk any more about it now. You will hear about it from the others, sure enough.

Johan. Hm!

Dina. But there is something else I want very much to ask you.

Johan. What is that?

Dina. I suppose it is easy to make a position for oneself over in America?

Johan. No, it is not always easy; at first you often have to rough it and work very hard.

Dina. I should be quite ready to do that.

Johan. You?

Dina. I can work now; I am strong and healthy; and Aunt Martha taught me a lot.

Johan. Well, hang it, come back with us!

Dina. Ah, now you are only making fun of me; you said that to Olaf too. But what I wanted to know is if people are so very—so very moral over there?

Johan. Moral?

Dina. Yes; I mean are they as—as proper and as well-behaved as they are here?

Johan. Well, at all events they are not so bad as people here make out. You need not be afraid on that score.

Dina. You don't understand me. What I want to hear is just that they are *not* so proper and so moral.

Johan. Not? What would you wish them to be, then?

Dina. I would wish them to be natural.

Johan. Well, I believe that is just what they are.

Dina. Because in that case I should get on if I went there.

Johan. You would, for certain!—and that is why you must come back with us.

Dina. No, I don't want to go with you; I must go alone. Oh, I would make something of my life; I would get on—

Bernick (*speaking to* LONA *and his wife at the foot of the garden steps*). Wait a moment—I will fetch it, Betty dear; you might so easily catch cold. (*Comes into the room and looks for his wife's shawl.*)

Mrs. Bernick (*from outside*). You must come out too, Johan; we are going down to the grotto.

Bernick. No, I want Johan to stay here. Look here,

Dina; you take my wife's shawl and go with them. Johan is going to stay here with me, Betty dear. I want to hear how he is geting on over there.

Mrs. Bernick. Very well—then you will follow us; you know where you will find us. (MRS. BERNICK, LONA *and* DINA *go out through the garden, to the left.* BERNICK *looks after them for a moment, then goes to the farther door on the left and locks it, after which he goes up to* JOHAN, *grasps both his hands, and shakes them warmly.*)

Bernick. Johan, now that we are alone, you must let me thank you.

Johan. Oh, nonsense!

Bernick. My home and all the happiness that it means to me—my position here as a citizen—all these I owe to you.

Johan. Well, I am glad of it, Karsten; some good came of that mad story after all, then.

Bernick (*grasping his hands again*). But still you must let me thank you! Not one in ten thousand would have done what you did for me.

Johan. Rubbish! Weren't we, both of us, young and thoughtless? One of us had to take the blame, you know.

Bernick. But surely the guilty one was the proper one to do that?

Johan. Stop! At the moment the innocent one happened to be the proper one to do it. Remember, I had no ties—I was an orphan; it was a lucky chance to get free from the drudgery of the office. You, on the other hand, had your old mother still alive; and, besides that, you had just become secretly engaged to Betty, who was devoted to you. What would have happened between you and her if it had come to her ears?

Bernick. That is true enough, but still—

Johan. And wasn't it just for Betty's sake that you broke off your acquaintance with Mrs. Dorf? Why, it was merely in order to put an end to the whole thing that you were up there with her that evening.

Bernick. Yes, that unfortunate evening when that drunken creature came home! Yes, Johan, it was for

Betty's sake; but, all the same, it was splendid of you to let all the appearances go against you, and to go away.

Johan. Put your scruples to rest, my dear Karsten. We agreed that it should be so; you had to be saved, and you were my friend. I can tell you, I was uncommonly proud of that friendship. Here was I, drudging away like a miserable stick-in-the-mud, when you came back from your grand tour abroad, a great swell who had been to London and to Paris; and you chose me for your chum, although I was four years younger than you—it is true it was because you were courting Betty, I understand that now—but I *was* proud of it! Who would not have been? Who would not willingly have sacrificed himself for you?—especially as it only meant a month's talk in the town, and enabled me to get away into the wide world.

Bernick. Ah, my dear Johan, I must be candid and tell you that the story is not so completely forgotten yet.

Johan. Isn't it? Well, what does that matter to me, once I am back over there on my farm again?

Bernick. Then you mean to go back?

Johan. Of course.

Bernick. But not immediately, I hope?

Johan. As soon as possible. It was only to humour Lona that I came over with her, you know.

Bernick. Really? How so?

Johan. Well, you see, Lona is no longer young, and lately she began to be obsessed with home-sickness; but she never would admit it. (*Smiles.*) How could she venture to risk leaving such a flighty fellow as me alone, who before I was nineteen had been mixed up in—

Bernick. Well, what then?

Johan. Well, Karsten, now I am coming to a confession that I am ashamed to make.

Bernick. You surely haven't confided the truth to her?

Johan. Yes. It was wrong of me, but I could not do otherwise. You can have no conception what Lona has been to me. You never could put up with her;

but she has been like a mother to me. The first year we were out there, when things went so badly with us, you have no idea how she worked! And when I was ill for a long time, and could earn nothing and could not prevent her, she took to singing ballads in taverns, and gave lectures that people laughed at; and then she wrote a book that she has both laughed and cried over since then—all to keep the life in me. Could I look on when in the winter she, who had toiled and drudged for me, began to pine away? No, Karsten, I couldn't. And so I said, "You go home for a trip, Lona; don't be afraid for me, I am not so flighty as you think." And so—the end of it was that she had to know.

Bernick. And how did she take it?

Johan. Well, she thought, as was true, that as I knew I was innocent nothing need prevent me from taking a trip over here with her. But make your mind easy; Lona will let nothing out, and I shall keep my mouth shut as I did before.

Bernick. Yes, yes—I rely on that.

Johan. Here is my hand on it. And now we will say no more about that old story; luckily it is the only mad prank either of us has been guilty of, I am sure. I want thoroughly to enjoy the few days I shall stay here. You cannot think what a delightful walk we had this morning. Who would have believed that that little imp, who used to run about here and play angels' parts on the stage—! But tell me, my dear fellow, what became of her parents afterwards?

Bernick. Oh, my boy, I can tell you no more than I wrote to you immediately after you went away. I suppose you got my two letters?

Johan. Yes, yes, I have them both. So that drunken fellow deserted her?

Bernick. And drank himself to death afterwards.

Johan. And *she* died soon afterwards, too?

Bernick. She was proud; she betrayed nothing, and would accept nothing.

Johan. Well, at all events you did the right thing by taking Dina into your house.

Bernick. I suppose so. As a matter of fact it was Martha that brought that about.

Johan. So it was Martha? By the way, where is she to-day?

Bernick. She? Oh, when she hasn't her school to look after, she has her sick people to see to.

Johan. So it was Martha who interested herself in her.

Bernick. Yes, you know Martha has always had a certain liking for teaching; so she took a post in the Board-school. It was very ridiculous of her.

Johan. I thought she looked very worn yesterday; I should be afraid her health was not good enough for it.

Bernick. Oh, as far as her health goes, it is all right enough. But it is unpleasant for me; it looks as though I, her brother, were not willing to support her.

Johan. Support her? I thought she had means enough of her own.

Bernick. Not a penny. Surely you remember how badly off our mother was when you went away? She carried things on for a time with my assistance, but naturally I could not put up with that state of affairs permanently. I made her take me into the firm, but even then things did not go well. So I had to take over the whole business myself, and when we made up our balance-sheet it became evident that there was practically nothing left as my mother's share. And when mother died soon afterwards, of course Martha was left penniless.

Johan. Poor Martha!

Bernick. Poor! Why? You surely do not suppose I let her want for anything? No, I venture to say I am a good brother. Of course she has a home here with us; her salary as a teacher is more than enough for her to dress on; what more could she want?

Johan. Hm—that is not our idea of things in America.

Bernick. No, I dare say not—in such a revolutionary state of society as you find there. But in our small circle—in which, thank God, depravity has not gained a footing, up to now at all events—women are content

to occupy a seemly, as well as modest, position. Moreover, it is Martha's own fault; I mean, she might have been provided for long ago, if she had wished.

Johan. You mean she might have married?

Bernick. Yes, and married very well, too. She has had several good offers—curiously enough, when you think that she is a poor girl, no longer young, and, besides, quite an insignificant person.

Johan. Insignificant?

Bernick. Oh, I am not blaming her for that. I most certainly would not wish her otherwise. I can tell you it is always a good thing to have a steady-going person like that in a big house like this—some one you can rely on in any contingency.

Johan. Yes, but what does *she*—?

Bernick. She? How? Oh well, of course *she* has plenty to interest herself in; she has Betty and Olaf and me. People should not think first of themselves—women least of all. We have all got some community, great or small, to work for. That is my principle, at all events. (*Points to* KRAP, *who has come in from the right.*) Ah, here is an example of it, ready to hand. Do you suppose that it is my own affairs that are absorbing me just now? By no means. (*Eagerly to* KRAP.) Well?

Krap (*in an undertone, showing him a bundle of papers*). Here are all the sale contracts, completed.

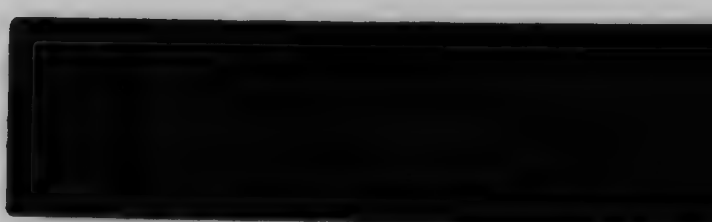
Bernick. Capital! Splendid!—Well, Johan, you must really excuse me for the present. (*In a low voice, grasping his hand.*) Thanks, Johan, thanks! And rest assured that anything I can do for you—. Well, of course you understand. Come along, Krap. (*They go into* BERNICK'S *room.*)

Johan (*looking after them for a moment*). Hm!—(*Turns to go down to the garden. At the same moment* MARTHA *comes in from the right, with a little basket over her arm.*) Martha!

Martha. Ah, Johan—is it you?

Johan. Out so early?

Martha. Yes. Wait a moment; the others are just coming. (*Moves towards the door on the left.*)



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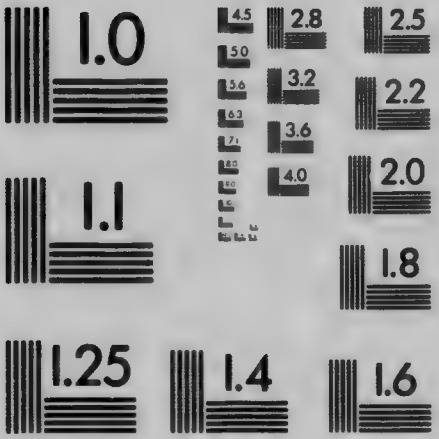

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Johan. Martha, are you always in such a hurry?

Martha. I?

Johan. Yesterday you seemed to avoid me, so that I never managed to have a word with you—we two old playfellows.

Martha. Ah, Johan; that is many, many years ago.

Johan. Good Lord—why, it is only fifteen years ago, no more and no less. Do you think I have changed so much?

Martha. You? Oh yes, you have changed too, although—

Johan. What do you mean?

Martha. Oh, nothing.

Johan. You do not seem to be very glad to see me again.

Martha. I have waited so long, Johan—too long.

Johan. Waited? For me to come?

Martha. Yes.

Johan. And why did you think I would come?

Martha. To atone for the wrong you had done.

Johan. I?

Martha. Have you forgotten that it was through you that a woman died in need and in shame? Have you forgotten that it was through you that the best years of a young girl's life were embittered?

Johan. And you can say such things to me? Martha, has your brother never—?

Martha. Never what?

Johan. Has he never—oh, of course, I mean has he never so much as said a word in my defence?

Martha. Ah, Johan, you know Karsten's high principles.

Johan. Hm—! Oh, of course; I know my old friend Karsten's high principles! But really this is—. Well, well. I was having a talk with him just now. He seems to me to have altered considerably.

Martha. How can you say that? I am sure Karsten has always been an excellent man.

Johan. Yes, that was not exactly what I meant—but never mind. Hm! Now I understand the light you

have seen me in; it was the return of the prodigal that you were waiting for.

Martha. Johan, I will tell you what light I have seen you in. (*Points down to the garden.*) Do you see that girl playing on the grass down there with Olaf? That is Dina. Do you remember that incoherent letter you wrote me when you went away? You asked me to believe in you. I have believed in you, Johan. All the horrible things that were rumoured about you after you had gone must have been done through being led astray —from thoughtlessness, without premeditation.

Johan. What do you mean?

Martha. Oh, you understand me well enough—not a word more of that. But of course you had to go away and begin afresh—a new life. Your duties here which you never remembered to undertake—or never were able to undertake—I have undertaken for you. I tell you this, so that you shall not have that also to reproach yourself with. I have been a mother to that much-wronged child; I have brought her up as well as I was able.

Johan. And have wasted your whole life for that reason.

Martha. It has not been wasted. But you have come late, Johan.

Johan. Martha—if only I could tell you—. Well, at all events let me thank you for your loyal friendship.

Martha (*with a sad smile*). Hm.—Well, we have had it out now, Johan. Hush, some one is coming. Good-bye, I can't stay now. (*Goes out through the farther door on the left.* LONA *comes in from the garden, followed by* MRS. BERNICK.)

Mrs. Bernick. But, good gracious, Lona—what are you thinking of?

Lona. Let me be, I tell you! I must and will speak to him.

Mrs. Bernick. But it would be a scandal of the worst sort! Ah, Johan—still here?

Lona. Out with you, my boy; don't stay here indoors; go down into the garden and have a chat with Dina.

Johan. I was just thinking of doing so.

Mrs. Bernick. But—

Lona. Look here, Johan—have you had a good look at Dina?

Johan. I should think so!

Lona. Well, look at her to some purpose, my boy. That would be somebody for *you!*

Mrs. Bernick. But, Lona!

Johan. Somebody for me?

Lona. Yes, to look at, I mean. Be off with you!

Johan. Oh, I don't need any pressing. (*Goes down into the garden.*)

Mrs. Bernick. Lona, you astound me! You cannot possibly be serious about it?

Lona. Indeed I am. Isn't she sweet and healthy and honest? She is exactly the wife for Johan. She is just what he needs over there; it will be a change from an old step-sister.

Mrs. Bernick. Dina? Dina Dorf? But think—

Lona. I think first and foremost of the boy's happiness. Because, help him I must; he has not much idea of that sort of thing; he has never had much of an eye for girls or women.

Mrs. Bernick. He? Johan? Indeed I think we have had only too sad proofs that—

Lona. Oh, devil take all those stupid stories! Where is Karsten? I mean to speak to him.

Mrs. Bernick. Lona, you must not do it, I tell you!

Lona. I am going to. If the boy takes a fancy to her—and she to him—then they shall make a match of it. Karsten is such a clever man, he must find some way to bring it about.

Mrs. Bernick. And do you think these American indecencies will be permitted here?

Lona. Bosh, Betty!

Mrs. Bernick. Do you think a man like Karsten, with his strictly moral way of thinking—

Lona. Pooh! he is not so terribly moral.

Mrs. Bernick. What have you the audacity to say?

Lona. I have the audacity to say that Karsten is not any more particularly moral than anybody else.

Mrs. Bernick. So you still hate him as deeply as that! But what are you doing here, if you have never been able to forget that? I cannot understand how you dare look him in the face after the shameful insult you put upon him in the old days.

Lona. Yes, Betty, that time I did forget myself badly.

Mrs. Bernick. And to think how magnanimously he has forgiven you—he, who had never done any wrong! It was not *his* fault that you encouraged yourself with hopes. But since then you have always hated me too. (*Bursts into tears.*) You have always grudged me my good fortune. And now you come here to heap all this on my head—to let the whole town know what sort of a family I have brought Karsten into. Yes, it is me that it all falls upon, and that is what you want. Oh, it is abominable of you! (*Goes out by the door on the left, in tears.*)

Lona (*looking after her*). Poor Betty! (BERNICK *comes in from his room. He stops at the door to speak to* KRAP.)

Bernick. Yes, that is excellent, Krap—capital! Send twenty pounds to the fund for dinners to the poor. (*Turns round.*) Lona! (*Comes forward.*) Are you alone? Is Betty not coming in?

Lona. No. Would you like me to call her?

Bernick. No, no—not at all. Oh, Lona, you don't know how anxious I have been to speak openly to you—after having begged for your forgiveness.

Lona. Look here, Karsten—do not let us be sentimental; it doesn't suit us.

Bernick. You *must* listen to me, Lona. I know only too well how much appearances are against me, as you have learnt all about that affair with Dina's mother. But I swear to you that it was only a temporary infatuation; I was really, truly and honestly, in love with you once.

Lona. Why do you think I have come home?

Bernick. Whatever you have in your mind, I entreat you to do nothing until I have exculpated myself. I can do that, Lona; at all events I can excuse myself.

Lona. Now you are frightened. You once were in

love with me, you say. Yes, you told me that often enough in your letters; and perhaps it was true, too—in a way—as long as you were living out in the great, free world which gave you the courage to think freely and greatly. Perhaps you found in me a little more character and strength of will and independence than in most of the folk at home here. And then we kept it secret between us; nobody could make fun of your bad taste.

Bernick. Lona, how can you think—?

Lona. But when you came back—when you heard the gibes that were made at me on all sides—when you noticed how people laughed at what they called my absurdities—

Bernick. You *were* regardless of people's opinion at that time.

Lona. Chiefly to annoy the petticoated and trousered prudes that one met at every turn in the town. And then, when you met that seductive young actress—

Bernick. It was a boyish escapade—nothing more; I swear to you that there was no truth in a tenth part of the rumours and gossip that went about.

Lona. Maybe. But then, when Betty came home—a pretty young girl, idolised by every one—and it became known that she would inherit all her aunt's money and that I would have nothing—

Bernick. That is just the point, Lona; and now you shall have the truth without any beating about the bush. I did not love Betty then; I did not break off my engagement with you because of any new attachment. It was entirely for the sake of the money. I needed it; I *had* to make sure of it.

Lona. And you have the face to tell me that?

Bernick. Yes, I have. Listen, Lona.

Lona. And yet you wrote to me that an unconquerable passion for Betty had overcome you—invoked my magnanimity—begged me, for Betty's sake, to hold my tongue about all that had been between us.

Bernick. I *had* to, I tell you.

Lona. Now, by Heaven, I don't regret that I forgot myself as I did that time!

Bernick. Let me tell you the plain truth of how things stood with me then. My mother, as you remember, was at the head of the business, but she was absolutely without any business ability whatever. I was hurriedly summoned home from Paris; times were critical, and they relied on me to set things straight. What did I find? I found—and you must keep this a profound secret—a house on the brink of ruin. Yes—as good as on the brink of ruin, this old respected house which had seen three generations of us. What else could I—the son, the only son—do than look about for some means of saving it?

Lona. And so you saved the house of Bernick at the cost of a woman.

Bernick. You know quite well that Betty was in love with me.

Lona. But what about me?

Bernick. Believe me, Lona, you would never have been happy with me.

Lona. Was it out of consideration for my happiness that you sacrificed me.

Bernick. Do you suppose I acted as I did from selfish motives? If I had stood alone then, I would have begun all over again with cheerful courage. But you do not understand how the life of a man of business, with his tremendous responsibilities, is bound up with that of the business which falls to his inheritance. Do you realise that the prosperity or the ruin of hundreds—of thousands—depends on him? Can you not take into consideration the fact that the whole community in which both you and I were born would have been affected to the most dangerous extent if the house of Bernick had gone to smash?

Lona. Then is it for the sake of the community that you have maintained your position these fifteen years upon a lie?

Bernick. Upon a lie?

Lona. What does Betty know of all this that underlies her union with you?

Bernick. Do you suppose that I would hurt her feelings to no purpose by disclosing the truth?

Lona. To no purpose, you say? Well, well—you are a man of business; you ought to understand what is to the purpose. But listen to me, Karsten—*I* am going to speak the plain truth now. Tell me, are you really happy?

Bernick. In my family life, do you mean?

Lona. Yes.

Bernick. I am, Lona. You have not been a self-sacrificing friend to me in vain. I can honestly say that I have grown happier every year. Betty is good and willing; and if I were to tell you how, in the course of years, she has learnt to model her character on the lines of my own—

Lona. Hm!

Bernick. At first, of course, she had a whole lot of romantic notions about love; she could not reconcile herself to the idea that, little by little, it must change into a quiet comradeship.

Lona. But now she is quite reconciled to that?

Bernick. Absolutely. As you can imagine, daily intercourse with me has had no small share in developing her character. Every one, in their degree, has to learn to lower their own pretensions, if they are to live worthily of the community to which they belong. And Betty, in her turn, has gradually learnt to understand this; and that is why our home is now a model to our fellow-citizens.

Lona. But your fellow-citizens know nothing about the lie?

Bernick. The lie?

Lona. Yes—the lie you have persisted in for these fifteen years.

Bernick. Do you mean to say that you call that—?

Lona. I call it a lie—a threefold lie; first of all there is the lie towards me, then the lie towards Betty, and then the lie towards Johan.

Bernick. Betty has never asked me to speak.

Lona. Because she has known nothing.

Bernick. And *you* will not demand it—out of consideration for her.

Lona. Oh, no—I shall manage to put up with their gibes well enough; I have broad shoulders.

Bernick. And Johan will not demand it either; he has promised me that.

Lona. But you yourself, Karsten? Do you feel within yourself no impulse urging you to shake yourself free of this lie?

Bernick. Do you suppose that of my own free will I would sacrifice my family happiness and my position in the world?

Lona. What right have you to the position you hold?

Bernick. Every day during these fifteen years I have earned some little right to it—by my conduct, and by what I have achieved by my work.

Lona. True, you have achieved a great deal by your work, for yourself as well as for others. You are the richest and most influential man in the town; nobody in it dares do otherwise than defer to your will, because you are looked upon as a man without spot or blemish; your home is regarded as a model home, and your conduct as a model of conduct. But all this grandeur, and you with it, is founded on a treacherous morass. A moment may come and a word may be spoken—and you and all your grandeur will be engulfed in the morass, if you do not save yourself in time.

Bernick. Lona—what is your object in coming here?

Lona. I want to help you to get firm ground under your feet, Karsten.

Bernick. Revenge!—you want to revenge yourself! I suspected it. But you won't succeed! There is only one person here that can speak with authority, and he will be silent.

Lona. You mean Johan?

Bernick. Yes, Johan. If any one else accuses me, I shall deny everything. If any one tries to crush me, I shall fight for my life. But you will never succeed in that, let me tell you! The one who could strike me down will say nothing—and is going away.

(RUMMEL *and* VIGELAND *come in from the right.*)

Rummel. Good-morning, my dear Bernick, good-

morning. You must come up with us to the Commercial Association. There is a meeting about the railway scheme, you know.

Bernick. I cannot. It is impossible just now.

Vigeland. You really must, Mr. Bernick.

Rummel. Bernick, you must. There is an opposition to us on foot. Hammer, and the rest of those who believe in a line along the coast, are declaring that private interests are at the back of the new proposals.

Bernick. Well, then, explain to them—

Vigeland. Our explanations have no effect, Mr. Bernick.

Rummel. No, no, you must come yourself. Naturally, no one would dare to suspect you of such duplicity.

Lona. I should think not.

Bernick. I cannot, I tell you; I am not well. Or, at all events, wait—let me pull myself together. (RÖRLUND *comes in from the right.*)

Rörlund. Excuse me, Mr. Bernick, but I am terribly upset.

Bernick. Why, what is the matter with you?

Rörlund. I must put a question to you, Mr. Bernick. Is it with your consent that the young girl who has found a shelter under your roof shows herself in the open street in the company of a person who—

Lona. What person, Mr. Parson?

Rörlund. With the person from whom, of all others in the world, she ought to be kept farthest apart!

Lona. Ha! ha!

Rörlund. Is it with your consent, Mr. Bernick?

Bernick (*looking for his hat and gloves*). I know nothing about it. You must excuse me; I am in a great hurry. I am due at the Commercial Association.

(HILMAR *comes up from the garden and goes over to the farther door on the left.*)

Hilmar. Betty, Betty, I want to speak to you.

Mrs. Bernick (*coming to the door*). What is it?

Hilmar. You ought to go down into the garden and put a stop to the flirtation that is going on between a certain person and Dina Dorf! It has quite got on my nerves to listen to them.

Lona. Indeed! And what has the certain person been saying?

Hilmar. Oh, only that he wishes she would go off to America with him. Ugh!

Rörlund. Is it possible?

Mrs. Bernick. What do you say?

Lona. But that would be perfectly splendid!

Bernick. Impossible! You cannot have heard aright.

Hilmar. Ask him yourself, then. Here comes the pair of them. Only, leave me out of it, please.

Bernick (*to* RUMMEL *and* VIGELAND). I will follow you —in a moment. (RUMMEL *and* VIGELAND *go out to the right.* JOHAN *and* DINA *come up from the garden.*)

Johan. Hurrah, Lona, she is going with us!

Mrs. Bernick. But, Johan—are you out of your senses?

Rörlund. Can I believe my ears! Such an atrocious scandal! By what arts of seduction have you—?

Johan. Come, come, sir—what are you saying?

Rörlund. Answer me, Dina; do you mean to do this —entirely of your own free will?

Dina. I must get away from here.

Rörlund. But with *him!*—with *him!*

Dina. Can you tell me of any one else here who would have the courage to take me with him?

Rörlund. Very well, then—you shall learn who he is.

Johan. Do not speak!

Bernick. Not a word more!

Rörlund. If I did not, I should be unworthy to serve a community of whose morals I have been appointed a guardian, and should be acting most unjustifiably towards this young girl, in whose upbringing I have taken a material part, and who is to me—

Johan. Take care what you are doing!

Rörlund. She *shall* know! Dina, this is the man who was the cause of all your mother's misery and shame.

Bernick. Mr. Rörlund—?

Dina. He! (*To* JOHAN.) Is this true?

Johan. Karsten, you answer.

Bernick. Not a word more! Do not let us say another word about it to-day.

Dina. Then it is true.

Rörlund. Yes, it is true. And more than that—this fellow, whom you were going to trust, did not run away from home empty-handed; ask him about old Mrs. Bernick's cash-box—Mr. Bernick can bear witness to that!

Lona. Liar!

Bernick. Ah!—

Mrs. Bernick. My God! my God!

Johan (*rushing at* RÖRLUND *with uplifted arm*). And you dare to—

Lona (*restraining him*). Do not strike him, Johan!

Rörlund. That is right, assault me! But the truth will out; and it *is* the truth—Mr. Bernick has admitted it, and the whole town knows it. Now, Dina, you know him. (*A short silence.*)

Johan (*softly, grasping* BERNICK *by the arm*). Karsten, Karsten, what have you done?

Mrs. Bernick (*in tears*). Oh, Karsten, to think that I should have mixed you up in all this disgrace!

Sandstad (*coming in hurriedly from the right, and calling out, with his hand still on the door-handle*). You positively *must* come now, Mr. Bernick. The fate of the whole railway is hanging by a thread.

Bernick (*abstractedly*). What is it? What have I to—

Lona (*earnestly and with emphasis*). You have to go and be a pillar of society, brother-in-law.

Sandstad. Yes, come along; we need the full weight of your moral excellence on our side.

Johan (*aside, to* BERNICK). Karsten, we will have a talk about this to-morrow. (*Goes out through the garden.* BERNICK, *looking half dazed, goes out to the right with* SANDSTAD.)

ACT III

(SCENE.—*The same room.* BERNICK, *with a cane in his hand and evidently in a great rage, comes out of the farther room on the left, leaving the door half-open behind him.*)

Bernick (*speaking to his wife, who is in the other room*). There! I have given it him in earnest now; I don't think he will forget that thrashing! What do you say?—And *I* say that you are an injudicious mother: You make excuses for him, and countenance any sort of rascality on his part.—Not rascality? What do you call it, then? Slipping out of the house at night, going out in a fishing boat, staying away till well on in the day, and giving me such a horrible fright when I have so much to worry me! And then the young scamp has the audacity to threaten that he will run away! Just let him try it!—You? No, very likely; you don't trouble yourself much about what happens to him. I really believe that if he were to get killed—! Oh, really? Well, *I* have work to leave behind me in the world; I have no fancy for being left childless.—Now, do not raise objections, Betty; it shall be as I say—he is confined to the house. (*Listens.*) Hush; do not let any one notice anything. (KRAP *comes in from the right.*)

Krap. Can you spare me a moment, Mr. Bernick?

Bernick (*throwing away the cane*). Certainly, certainly. Have you come from the yard?

Krap. Yes. Ahem—!

Bernick. Well? Nothing wrong with the "Palm Tree," I hope?

Krap. The "Palm Tree" can sail to-morrow, but—

Bernick. It is the "Indian Girl," then? I had a suspicion that that obstinate fellow—

Krap. The "Indian Girl" can sail to-morrow, too; but I am sure she will not get very far.

Bernick. What do you mean?

Krap. Excuse me, sir; that door is standing ajar, and I think there is some one in the other room—

Bernick (*shutting the door*). There, then! But what is this that no one else must hear?

Krap. Just this—that I believe Aune intends to let the "Indian Girl" go to the bottom with every mother's son on board.

Bernick. Good God!—what makes you think that?

Krap. I cannot account for it any other way, sir.

Bernick. Well, tell me as briefly as you can—

Krap. I will. You know yourself how slowly the work has gone on in the yard since we got the new machines and the new inexperienced hands?

Bernick. Yes, yes.

Krap. But this morning, when I went down there, I noticed that the repairs to the American boat had made extraordinary progress; the great hole in the bottom—the rotten patch, you know—

Bernick. Yes, yes—what about it?

Krap. Was completely repaired—to all appearance, at any rate—covered up—looked as good as new. I heard that Aune himself had been working at it by lantern light the whole night.

Bernick. Yes, yes—well?

Krap. I turned it over in my head for a bit; the hands were away at their breakfast, so I found an opportunity to have a look round the boat, both outside and in, without any one's seeing me. I had a job to get down to the bottom through the cargo, but I learnt the truth. There is something very suspicious going on, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. I cannot believe it, Krap. I cannot and will not believe such a thing of Aune.

Krap. I am very sorry—but it is the simple truth. Something very suspicious is going on. No new timbers put in, as far as I could see, only stopped up and tinkered at, and covered over with sailcloth and tarpaulins and that sort of thing—an absolute fraud. The "Indian Girl" will never get to New York; she will go to the bottom like a cracked pot.

Bernick. This is most horrible! But what can be his object, do you suppose?

Krap. Probably he wants to bring the machines into discredit—wants to take his revenge—wants to force you to take the old hands on again.

Bernick. And to do this he is willing to sacrifice the lives of all on board.

Krap. He said the other day that there were no men on board the "Indian Girl"—only wild beasts.

Bernick. Yes, but—apart from that—has he no regard for the great loss of capital it would mean?

Krap. Aune does not look upon capital with a very friendly eye, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. That is perfectly true; he is an agitator and a fomenter of discontent; but such an unscrupulous thing as this—. Look here, Krap; you must look into the matter once more. Not a word of it to any one. The blame will fall on our yard if any one hears anything of it.

Krap. Of course, but—

Bernick. When the hands are away at their dinner you must manage to get down there again; I must have absolute certainty about it.

Krap. You shall, sir; but, excuse me, what do you propose to do?

Bernick. Report the affair, naturally. We cannot, of course, let ourselves become accomplices in such a crime. I could not have such a thing on my conscience. Moreover, it will make a good impression, both on the Press and on the public in general, if it is seen that I set all personal interests aside and let justice take its course.

Krap. Quite true, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. But first of all I must be absolutely certain. And meanwhile, do not breathe a word of it—

Krap. Not a word, sir. And you shall have your certainty. (*Goes out through the garden and down the street.*)

Bernick (*half aloud*). Shocking!—But no, it is impossible!—inconceivable!

(*As he turns to go into his room,* HILMAR *comes in from the right.*)

Hilmar. Good morning, Karsten. Let me congratu-

late you on your triumph at the Commercial Association yesterday.

Bernick. Thank you.

Hilmar. It was a brilliant triumph, I hear; the triumph of intelligent public spirit over selfishness and prejudice—something like a raid of French troops on the Kabyles. It is astonishing that after that unpleasant scene here, you could—

Bernick. Yes, yes—quite so.

Hilmar. But the decisive battle has not been fought yet.

Bernick. In the matter of the railway, do you mean?

Hilmar. Yes; I suppose you know the trouble that Hammer is brewing?

Bernick (*anxiously*). No, what is that?

Hilmar. Oh, he is greatly taken up with the rumour that is going round, and is preparing to dish up an article about it.

Bernick. What rumour?

Hilmar. About the extensive purchase of property along the branch line, of course.

Bernick. What? Is there such a rumour as that going about?

Hilmar. It is all over the town. I heard it at the club when I looked in there. They say that one of our lawyers has quietly bought up, on commission, all the forest land, all the mining land, all the waterfalls—

Bernick. Don't they say whom it was for?

Hilmar. At the club they thought it must be for some company, not connected with this town, that has got a hint of the scheme you have in hand, and has made haste to buy before the price of these properties went up. Isn't it villainous?—ugh!

Bernick. Villainous?

Hilmar. Yes, to have strangers putting their fingers into our pie—and one of our own local lawyers lending himself to such a thing! And now it will be outsiders that will get all the profits!

Bernick. But, after all, it is only an idle rumour.

Hilmar. Meanwhile people are believing it, and to-morrow or next day I have no doubt Hammer will

nail it to the counter as a fact. There is a general sense of exasperation in the town already. I heard several people say that if the rumour were confirmed they would take their names off the subscription lists.

Bernick. Impossible!

Hilmar. Is it? Why do you suppose these mercenary-minded creatures were so willing to go into the undertaking with you? Don't you suppose they have scented profit for themselves—

Bernick. It is impossible, I am sure; there is so much public spirit in our little community—

Hilmar. In our community? Of course you are a confirmed optimist, and so you judge others by yourself. But I, who am a tolerably experienced observer—! There isn't a single soul in the place—excepting ourselves, of course—not a single soul in the place who holds up the banner of the Ideal. (*Goes towards the verandah.*) Ugh, I can see them there!

Bernick. See whom?

Hilmar. Our two friends from America. (*Looks out to the right.*) And who is that they are walking with? As I am alive, if it is not the captain of the "Indian Girl." Ugh!

Bernick. What can they want with *him?*

Hilmar. Oh, he is just the right company for them. He looks as if he had been a slave-dealer or a pirate; and who knows what the other two may have been doing all these years.

Bernick. Let me tell you that it is grossly unjust to think such things about them.

Hilmar. Yes—you are an optimist. But here they are, bearing down upon us again; so I will get away while there is time. (*Goes towards the door on the left.* LONA *comes in from the right.*)

Lona. Oh, Hilmar, am I driving you away?

Hilmar. Not at all; I am in rather a hurry; I want to have a word with Betty. (*Goes into the farthest room on the left.*)

Bernick (*after a moment's silence*). Well, Lona?

Lona. Yes?

Bernick. What do you think of me to-day?

Lona. The same as I did yesterday. A lie more or less—

Bernick. I must enlighen you about it. Where has Johan gone?

Lona. He is coming; he had to see a man first.

Bernick. After what you heard yesterday, you will understand that my whole life will be ruined if the truth comes to light.

Lona. I can understand that.

Bernick. Of course, it stands to reason that *I* was not guilty of the crime there was so much talk about here.

Lona. That stands to reason. But who was the thief?

Bernick. There was no thief. There was no money stolen—not a penny.

Lona. How is that?

Bernick. Not a penny, I tell you.

Lona. But those rumours? How did that shameful rumour get about that Johan—

Bernick. Lona, I think I can speak to you as I could to no one else. I will conceal nothing from you. *I* was partly to blame for spreading the rumour.

Lona. You? You could act in that way towards a man who for your sake—!

Bernick. Do not condemn me without bearing in mind how things stood at that time. I told you about it yesterday. I came home and found my mother involved in a mesh of injudicious undertakings; we had all manner of bad luck—it seemed as if misfortunes were raining upon us, and our house was on the verge of ruin. I was half reckless and half in despair. Lona, I believe it was mainly to deaden my thoughts that I let myself drift into that entanglement that ended in Johan's going away.

Lona. Hm—

Bernick. You can well imagine how every kind of rumour was set on foot after he and you had gone. People began to say that it was not his first piece of folly—that Dorf had received a large sum of money to hold his tongue and go away; other people said that

she had received it. At the same time it was obvious that our house was finding it difficult to meet its obligations. What was more natural than that scandal-mongers should find some connection between these two rumours? And as the woman remained here, living in poverty, people declared that he had taken the money with him to America; and every time rumour mentioned the sum, it grew larger.

Lona. And you, Karsten—?

Bernick. I grasped at the rumour like a drowning man at a straw.

Lona. You helped to spread it?

Bernick. I did not contradict it. Our creditors had begun to be pressing, and I had the task of keeping them quiet. The result was the dissipating of any suspicion as to the stability of the firm; people said that we had been hit by a temporary piece of ill-luck—that all that was necessary was that they should not press us—only give us time and every creditor would be paid in full.

Lona. And every creditor was paid in full?

Bernick. Yes, Lona, that rumour saved our house and made me the man I now am.

Lona. That is to say, a lie has made you the man you now are.

Bernick. Whom did it injure at the time? It was Johan's intention never to come back.

Lona. You ask whom it injured. Look into your own heart, and tell me if it has not injured you.

Bernick. Look into any man's heart you please, and you will always find, in every one, at least one black spot which he has to keep concealed.

Lona. And you call yourselves pillars of society!

Bernick. Society has none better.

Lona. And of what consequence is it whether such a society be propped up or not? What does it all consist of? Show and lies—and nothing else. Here are you, the first man in the town, living in grandeur and luxury, powerful and respected—you, who have branded an innocent man as a criminal.

Bernick. Do you suppose I am not deeply conscious

of the wrong I have done him? And do you suppose I am not ready to make amends to him for it?

Lona. How? By speaking out?

Bernick. Would you have the heart to insist on that?

Lona. What else can make amends for such a wrong?

Bernick. I am rich, Lona; Johan can demand any sum he pleases—

Lona. Yes, offer him money, and you will hear what he will say.

Bernick. Do you know what he intends to do?

Lona. No; since yesterday he has been dumb. He looks as if this had made a grown man of him all at once.

Bernick. I must talk to him.

Lona. Here he comes. (JOHAN *comes in from the right.*)

Bernick (*going towards him*). Johan—!

Johan (*motioning him away*). Listen to me first. Yesterday morning I gave you my word that I would hold my tongue.

Bernick. You did.

Johan. But then I did not know—

Bernick. Johan, only let me say a word or two to explain the circumstances—

Johan. It is unnecessary; I understand the circumstances perfectly. The firm was in a dangerous position at the time; I had gone off, and you had my defenceless name and reputation at your mercy. Well, I do not blame you so very much for what you did; we were young and thoughtless in those days. But now I have need of the truth, and now you must speak.

Bernick. And just now I have need of all my reputation for morality, and therefore I *cannot* speak.

Johan. I don't take much account of the false reports you spread about me; it is the other thing that you must take the blame of. I shall make Dina my wife, and here—here in your town—I mean to settle down and live with her.

Lona. Is that what you mean to do?

Bernick. With Dina? Dina as your wife?—in this town?

Johan. Yes, here and nowhere else. I mean to stay here to defy all these liars and slanderers. But before I can win her you must exonerate me.

Bernick. Have you considered that, if I confess to the one thing, it will inevitably mean making myself responsible for the other as well? You will say that I can show by our books that nothing dishonest happened? But I cannot; our books were not so accurately kept in those days. And even if I could, what good would it do? Should I not in any case be pointed at as the man who had once saved himself by an untruth, and for fifteen years had allowed that untruth and all its consequences to stand without having raised a finger to demolish it? You do not know our community very much, or you would realise that it would ruin me utterly.

Johan. I can only tell you that I mean to make Mrs. Dorf's daughter my wife, and live with her in this town.

Bernick (wiping the perspiration from his forehead). Listen to me, Johan—and you too, Lona. The circumstances I am in just now are quite exceptional. I am situated in such a way that if you aim this blow at me you will not only destroy me, but will also destroy a great future, rich in blessings, that lies before the community which, after all, was the home of your childhood.

Johan. And if I do not aim this blow at you, I shall be destroying all my future happiness with my own hand.

Lona. Go on, Karsten.

Bernick. I will tell you, then. It is mixed up with the railway project, and the whole thing is not quite so simple as you think. I suppose you have heard that last year there was some talk of a railway line along the coast? Many influential people backed up the idea—people in the town and the suburbs, and especially the Press; but I managed to get the proposal

quashed, on the ground that it would have injured our steamboat trade along the coast.

Lona. Have you any interest in the steamboat trade?

Bernick. Yes. But no one ventured to suspect me on that account; my honoured name fully protected me from that. For the matter of that, I could have stood the loss; but the place could not have stood it. So the inland line was decided upon. As soon as that was done, I assured myself—without saying anything about it—that a branch line could be laid to the town.

Lona. Why did you say nothing about it, Karsten?

Bernick. Have you heard the rumours of extensive buying up of forest lands, mines and waterfalls—?

Johan. Yes, apparently it is some company from another part of the country—

Bernick. As these properties are situated at present, they are as good as valueless to their owners, who are scattered about the neighbourhood; they have therefore been sold comparatively cheap. If the purchaser had waited till the branch line began to be talked of, the proprietors would have asked exorbitant prices.

Lona. Well—what then?

Bernick. Now I am going to tell you something that can be construed in different ways—a thing to which, in our community, a man could only confess provided he had an untarnished and honoured name to take his stand upon.

Lona. Well?

Bernick. It is I that have bought up the whole of them.

Lona. You?

Johan. On your own account?

Bernick. On my own account. If the branch line becomes an accomplished fact, I am a millionaire; if it does not, I am ruined.

Lona. It is a big risk, Karsten.

Bernick. I have risked my whole fortune on it.

Lona. I am not thinking of your fortune; but if it comes to light that—

Bernick. Yes, that is the critical part of it. With the unblemished and honoured name I have hitherto

borne, I can take the whole thing upon my shoulders, carry it through, and say to my fellow-citizens: "See, I have taken this risk for the good of the community."

Lona. Of the community?

Bernick. Yes; and not a soul will doubt my motives.

Lona. Then some of those concerned in it have acted more openly—without any secret motives or considerations.

Bernick. Who?

Lona. Why, of course, Rummel and Sandstad and Vigeland.

Bernick. To get them on my side I was obliged to let them into the secret.

Lona. And they?

Bernick. They have stipulated for a fifth part of the profits as their share.

Lona. Oh, these pillars of society!

Bernick. And isn't it society itself that forces us to use these underhand means? What would have happened, if I had not acted secretly? Everybody would have wanted to have a hand in the undertaking; the whole thing would have been divided up, mismanaged and bungled. There is not a single man in the town except myself who is capable of directing so big an affair as this will be. In this country, almost without exception, it is only foreigners who have settled here who have the aptitude for big business schemes. That is the reason why my conscience acquits me in the matter. It is only in my hands that these properties can become a real blessing to the many who have to make their daily bread.

Lona. I believe you are right there, Karsten.

Johan. But I have no concern with the many, and my life's happiness is at stake.

Bernick. The welfare of your native place is also at stake. If things come out which cast reflections on my earlier conduct, then all my opponents will fall upon me with united vigour. A youthful folly is never allowed to be forgotten in our community. They would go through the whole of my previous life, bring up a thousand little incidents in it, interpret and explain

them in the light of what has been revealed; they would crush me under the weight of rumours and slanders. I should be obliged to abandon the railway scheme; and, if I take my hand off that, it will come to nothing, and I shall be ruined and my life as a citizen will be over.

Lona. Johan, after what we have just heard, you must go away from here and hold your tongue.

Bernick. Yes, yes, Johan—you must!

Johan. Yes, I will go away, and I will hold my tongue; but I shall come back, and then I shall speak.

Bernick. Stay over there, Johan; hold your tongue, and I am willing to share with you—

Johan. Keep your money, but give me back my name and reputation.

Bernick. And sacrifice my own!

Johan. You and your community must get out of that the best way you can. I must and shall win Dina for my wife. And therefore I am going to sail to-morrow in the "Indian Girl"—

Bernick. In the "Indian Girl"?

Johan. Yes. The captain has promised to take me. I shall go over to America, as I say; I shall sell my farm and set my affairs in order. In two months I shall be back.

Bernick. And then you will speak?

Johan. Then the guilty man must take his guilt on himself.

Bernick. Have you forgotten that, if I do that, I must also take on myself guilt that is not mine?

Johan. Who is it that for the last fifteen years has benefited by that shameful rumour?

Bernick. You will drive me to desperation! Well, if you speak, I shall deny everything! I shall say it is a plot against me—that you have come here to blackmail me!

Lona. For shame, Karsten!

Bernick. I am a desperate man, I tell you, and I shall fight for my life. I shall deny everything—everything!

Johan. I have your two letters. I found them in

my box among my other papers. This morning I read them again; they are plain enough.

Bernick. And will you make them public?

Johan. If it becomes necessary.

Bernick. And you will be back here in two months?

Johan. I hope so. The wind is fair. In three weeks I shall be in New York—if the "Indian Girl" does not go to the bottom.

Bernick (*with a start*). Go to the bottom? Why should the "Indian Girl" go to the bottom?

Johan. Quite so—why should she?

Bernick (*scarcely audibly*). Go to the bottom?

Johan. Well, Karsten, now you know what is before you. You must find your own way out. Good-bye! You can say good-bye to Betty for me, although she has not treated me like a sister. But I must see Martha. She shall tell Dina—; she shall promise me—(*Goes out through the farther door on the left.*)

Bernick (*to himself*). The "Indian Girl"—? (*Quickly.*) Lona, you *must* prevent that!

Lona. You see for yourself, Karsten—I have no influence over him any longer. (*Follows* JOHAN *into the other room.*)

Bernick (*a prey to uneasy thoughts*). Go to the bottom—?

(AUNE *comes in from the right.*)

Aune. Excuse me, sir, but if it is convenient—

Bernick (*turning round angrily*). What do you want?

Aune. To know if I may ask you a question, sir.

Bernick. Be quick about it, then. What is it?

Aune. I wanted to ask if I am to consider it as certain—absolutely certain—that I should be dismissed from the yard if the "Indian Girl" were not ready to sail to-morrow?

Bernick. What do you mean? The ship *is* ready to sail.

Aune. Yes—it is. But suppose it were not, should I be discharged?

Bernick. What is the use of asking such idle questions?

Aune. Only that I should like to know, sir. Will you answer me that?—should I be discharged?

Bernick. Am I in the habit of keeping my word or not?

Aune. Then to-morrow I should have lost the position I hold in my house and among those near and dear to me—lost my influence over men of my own class—lost all opportunity of doing anything for the cause of the poorer and needier members of the community?

Bernick. Aune, we have discussed all that before.

Aune. Quite so—then the "Indian Girl" will sail.

(*A short silence.*)

Bernick. Look here—it is impossible for me to have my eyes everywhere—I cannot be answerable for everything. You can give me your assurance, I suppose, that the repairs have been satisfactorily carried out?

Aune. You gave me very short grace, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. But I understand you to warrant the repairs?

Aune. The weather is fine, and it is summer.

(*Another pause.*)

Bernick. Have you anything else to say to me?

Aune. I think not, sir.

Bernick. Then—the "Indian Girl" will sail—

Aune. To-morrow?

Bernick. Yes.

Aune. Very good. (*Bows and goes out.* BERNICK *stands for a moment irresolute; then walks quickly towards the door, as if to call* AUNE *back; but stops, hesitatingly, with his hand on the door-handle. At that moment the door is opened from without, and* KRAP *comes in.*)

Krap (*in a low voice*). Aha, he has been here. Has he confessed?

Bernick. Hm—; have you discovered anything?

Krap. What need of that, sir? Could you not see the evil conscience looking out of the man's eyes?

Bernick. Nonsense—such things don't show. Have you discovered anything, I want to know?

Krap. I could not manage it; I was too late. They had already begun hauling the ship out of the dock. But their very haste in doing that plainly shows that—

Bernick. It shows nothing. Has the inspection taken place, then?

Krap. Of course; but—

Bernick. There, you see! And of course they found nothing to complain of?

Krap. Mr. Bernick, you know very well how much this inspection means, especially in a yard that has such a good name as ours has.

Bernick. No matter—it takes all responsibility off us.

Krap. But, sir, could you really not tell from Aune's manner that—?

Bernick. Aune has completely reassured me, let me tell you.

Krap. And let me tell you, sir, that I am morally certain that—

Bernick. What does this mean, Krap? I see plainly enough that you want to get your knife into this man; but if you want to attack him you must find some other occasion. You know how important it is to me—or, I should say, to the owners—that the "Indian Girl" should sail to-morrow.

Krap. Very well—so be it; but if ever we hear of *that* ship again—hm!

(VIGELAND *comes in from the right.*)

Vigeland. I wish you a very good morning, Mr. Bernick. Have you a moment to spare?

Bernick. At your service, Mr. Vigeland.

Vigeland. I only want to know if you are also of opinion that the "Palm Tree" should sail to-morrow?

Bernick. Certainly; I thought that was quite settled.

Vigeland. Well, the captain came to me just now and told me that storm-signals have been hoisted.

Bernick. Oh! Are we to expect a storm?

Vigeland. A stiff breeze, at all events; but not a contrary wind—just the opposite.

Bernick. Hm—well, what do you say?

Vigeland. I say, as I said to the captain, that the "Palm Tree" is in the hands of Providence. Besides,

they are only going across the North Sea at first; and in England freights are running tolerably high just now, so that—

Bernick. Yes, it would probably mean a loss for us if we waited.

Vigeland. Besides, she is a stout ship, and fully insured as well. It is more risky, now, for the "Indian Girl"—

Bernick. What do you mean?

Vigeland. She sails to-morrow, too.

Bernick. Yes, the owners have been in such a hurry, and, besides—

Vigeland. Well, if that old hulk can venture out—and with such a crew, into the bargain—it would be a disgrace to us if we—

Bernick. Quite so. I presume you have the ship's papers with you.

Vigeland. Yes, here they are.

Bernick. Good; then will you go in with Mr. Krap?

Krap. Will you come in here, sir, and we will dispose of them at once.

Vigeland. Thank you.—And the issue we leave in the hands of the Almighty, Mr. Bernick. (*Goes with* KRAP *into* BERNICK'S *room.* RÖRLUND *comes up from the garden.*)

Rörlund. At home at this time of day, Mr. Bernick?

Bernick (*lost in thought*). As you see.

Rörlund. It was really on your wife's account I came. I thought she might be in need of a word of comfort.

Bernick. Very likely she is. But I want to have a little talk with you, too.

Rörlund. With the greatest of pleasure, Mr. Bernick. But what is the matter with you? You look quite pale and upset.

Bernick. Really? Do I? Well, what else could you expect—a man so loaded with responsibilities as I am? There is all my own big business—and now the planning of this railway.—But tell me something, Mr. Rörlund; let me put a question to you.

Rörlund. With pleasure, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. It is about a thought that has occurred to me. Suppose a man is face to face with an undertaking which will concern the welfare of thousands, and suppose it should be necessary to make a sacrifice of one—?

Rörlund. What do you mean?

Bernick. For example, suppose a man were thinking of starting a large factory. He knows for certain—because all his experience has taught him so—that sooner or later a toll of human life will be exacted in the working of that factory.

Rörlund. Yes, that is only too probable.

Bernick. Or, say a man embarks on a mining enterprise. He takes into his service fathers of families and young men in the first flush of their youth. Is it not quite safe to predict that all of them will not come out of it alive?

Rörlund. Yes, unhappily that is quite true.

Bernick. Well—a man in that position will know beforehand that the undertaking he proposes to start must undoubtedly, at some time or other, mean a loss of human life. But the undertaking itself is for the public good; for every man's life that it costs, it will undoubtedly promote the welfare of many hundreds.

Rörlund. Ah, you are thinking of the railway—of all the dangerous excavating and blasting, and that sort of thing—

Bernick. Yes—quite so—I am thinking of the railway. And, besides, the coming of the railway will mean the starting of factories and mines. But do not think, nevertheless—

Rörlund. My dear Mr. Bernick, you are almost over-conscientious. What I think is that, if you place the affair in the hands of Providence—

Bernick. Yes—exactly; Providence—

Rörlund. You are blameless in the matter. Go on and build your railway hopefully.

Bernick. Yes, but now I will put a special instance to you. Suppose a charge of blasting-powder had to be exploded in a dangerous place, and that unless it were exploded the line could not be constructed?

Suppose the engineer knew that it would cost the life of the workman who lit the fuse, but that it had to be lit, and that it was the engineer's duty to send a workman to do it?

Rörlund. Hm—

Bernick. I know what you will say. It would be a splendid thing if the engineer took the match himself and went and lit the fuse. But that is out of the question, so he must sacrifice a workman.

Rörlund. That is a thing no engineer here would ever do.

Bernick. No engineer in the bigger countries would think twice about doing it.

Rörlund. In the bigger countries? No, I can quite believe it. In those depraved and unprincipled communities—

Bernick. Oh, there is a good deal to be said for those communities.

Rörlund. Can you say that?—you, who yourself—

Bernick. In the bigger communities a man finds space to carry out a valuable project—finds the courage to make some sacrifice in a great cause; but here a man is cramped by all kinds of petty considerations and scruples.

Rörlund. Is human life a petty consideration?

Bernick. When that human life threatens the welfare of thousands.

Rörlund. But you are suggesting cases that are quite inconceivable, Mr. Bernick! I do not understand you at all to-day. And you quote the bigger countries—well, what do they think of human life there? They look upon it simply as part of the capital they have to use. But *we* look at things from a somewhat different moral standpoint, I should hope. Look at our respected shipping industry! Can you name a single one of our ship-owners who would sacrifice a human life for the sake of paltry gain? And then think of those scoundrels in the bigger countries, who for the sake of profit send out freights in one unseaworthy ship after another—

Bernick. I am not talking of unseaworthy ships!

Rörlund. But I am, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. Yes, but to what purpose? They have nothing to do with the question.—Oh, these small, timid considerations! If a General from this country were to take his men under fire and some of them were shot, I suppose he would have sleepless nights after it! It is not so in other countries. You should hear what that fellow in there says—

Rörlund. He? Who? The American—?

Bernick. Yes. You should hear how in America—

Rörlund. He, in there? And you did not tell me? I shall at once—

Bernick. It is no use; you won't be able to do anything with him.

Rörlund. We shall see. Ah, here he comes. (JOHAN *comes in from the other room.*)

Johan (*talking back through the open door*). Yes, yes, Dina—as you please; but I do not mean to give you up, all the same. I shall come back, and then everything will come right between us.

Rörlund. Excuse me, but what did you mean by that? What is it you propose to do?

Johan. I propose that that young girl, before whom you blackened my character yesterday, shall become my wife.

Rörlund. Your wife? And can you really suppose that—?

Johan. I mean to marry her.

Rörlund. Well, then you shall know the truth. (*Goes to the half-open door.*) Mrs. Bernick, will you be so kind as to come and be a witness—and you too, Miss Martha. And let Dina come. (*Sees* LONA *at the door.*) Ah, you here too?

Lona. Shall I come too?

Rörlund. As many as you please—the more the better.

Bernick. What are you going to do? (LONA, MRS. BERNICK, MARTHA, DINA *and* HILMAR *come in from the other room.*)

Mrs. Bernick. Mr. Rörlund, I have tried my hardest, but I cannot prevent him—

Rörlund. I shall prevent him, Mrs. Bernick. Dina,

you are a thoughtless girl, but I do not blame you so greatly. You have too long lacked the necessary moral support that should have sustained you. I blame myself for not having afforded you that support.

Dina. You mustn't speak now!

Mrs. Bernick. What is it?

Rörlund. It is now that I *must* speak, Dina, although your conduct yesterday and to-day has made it ten times more difficult for me. But all other considerations must give way to the necessity for saving you. You remember that I gave you my word; you remember what you promised you would answer when I judged that the right time had come. Now I dare not hesitate any longer, and therefore—. (*Turns to* JOHAN.) This young girl, whom you are persecuting, is my betrothed.

Mrs. Bernick. What?

Bernick. Dina!

Johan. She? Your—?

Martha. No, no, Dina!

Lona. It is a lie!

Johan. Dina—is this man speaking the truth?

Dina (*after a short pause*). Yes.

Rörlund. I hope this has rendered all your arts of seduction powerless. The step I have determined to take for Dina's good I now wish openly proclaimed to every one. I cherish the certain hope that it will not be misinterpreted. And now, Mrs. Bernick, I think it will be best for us to take her away from here, and try to bring back peace and tranquillity to her mind.

Mrs. Bernick. Yes, come with me. Oh, Dina—what a lucky girl you are! (*Takes* DINA *out to the left;* RÖRLUND *follows them.*)

Martha. Good-bye, Johan! (*Goes out.*)

Hilmar (*at the verandah door*). Hm—I really must say—

Lona (*who has followed* DINA *with her eyes, to* JOHAN). Don't be downhearted, my boy! I shall stay here and keep my eye on the parson. (*Goes out to the right.*)

Bernick. Johan, you won't sail in the "Indian Girl" now?

Johan. Indeed I shall.

Bernick. But you won't come back?

Johan. I am coming back.

Bernick. After this? What have you to do here after this?

Johan. Revenge myself on you all; crush as many of you as I can. (*Goes out to the right.* VIGELAND *and* KRAP *come in from* BERNICK'S *room.*)

Vigeland. There, now the papers are in order, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. Good, good.

Krap (*in a low voice*). And I suppose it is settled that the "Indian Girl" is to sail to-morrow?

Bernick. Yes. (*Goes into his room.* VIGELAND *and* KRAP *go out to the right.* HILMAR *is just going after them, when* OLAF *puts his head carefully out of the door on the left.*)

Olaf. Uncle! Uncle Hilmar!

Hilmar. Ugh, is it you? Why don't you stay upstairs? You know you are confined to the house.

Olaf (*coming a step or two nearer*). Hush! Uncle Hilmar, have you heard the news?

Hilmar. Yes, I have heard that you got a thrashing to-day.

Olaf (*looking threateningly towards his father's room*). He shan't thrash me any more. But have you heard that Uncle Johan is going to sail to-morow with the Americans?

Hilmar. What was that got to do with you? You had better run upstairs again.

Olaf. Perhaps I shall be going for a buffalo hunt, too, one of these days, uncle.

Hilmar. Rubbish! A coward like you—

Olaf. Yes—just you wait! You will learn something to-morrow!

Hilmar. Duffer! (*Goes out through the garden.* OLAF *runs into the room again and shuts the door, as he sees* KRAP *coming in from the right.*)

Krap (*going to the door of* BERNICK'S *room and*

opening it slightly). Excuse my bothering you again, Mr. Bernick; but there is a tremendous storm blowing up. (*Waits a moment, but there is no answer.*) Is the "Indian Girl" to sail, for all that? (*After a short pause, the following answer is heard.*)

Bernick (*from his room*). The "Indian Girl" is to sail, for all that.

(KRAP *shuts the door and goes out again to the right.*)

ACT IV

(SCENE.—*The same room. The work-table has been taken away. It is a stormy evening and already dusk. Darkness sets in as the following scene is in progress. A man-servant is lighting the chandelier; two maids bring in pots of flowers, lamps and candles, which they place on tables and stands along the walls.* RUMMEL, *in dress clothes, with gloves and a white tie, is standing in the room giving instructions to the servants.*)

Rummel. Only every other candle, Jacob. It must not look as if it were arranged for the occasion—it has to come as a surprise, you know. And all these flowers—? Oh, well, let them be; it will probably look as if they stood there every day. (BERNICK *comes out of his room.*)

Bernick (*stopping at the door*). What does this mean?

Rummel. Oh dear, is it you! (*To the servants.*) Yes, you might leave us for the present. (*The servants go out.*)

Bernick. But, Rummel, what is the meaning of this?

Rummel. It means that the proudest moment of your life has come. A procession of his fellow-citizens is coming to do honour to the first man of the town.

Bernick. What!

Rummel. In procession—with banners and a band! We ought to have had torches too; but we did not like

to risk that in this stormy weather. There will be illuminations—and that always sounds well in the newspapers.

Bernick. Listen, Rummel—I won't have anything to do with this.

Rummel. But it is too late now; they will be here in half-an-hour.

Bernick. But why did you not tell me about this before?

Rummel. Just because I was afraid you would raise objections to it. But I consulted your wife; she allowed me to take charge of the arrangements, while she looks after the refreshments.

Bernick (*listening*). What is that noise? Are they coming already? I fancy I hear singing.

Rummel (*going to the verandah door*). Singing? Oh, that is only the Americans. The "Indian Girl" is being towed out.

Bernick. Towed out? Oh, yes. No, Rummel, I cannot this evening; I am not well.

Rummel. You certainly do look bad. But you must pull yourself together; devil take it—you *must!* Sandstad and Vigeland and I all attach the greatest importance to carrying this thing through. We have got to crush our opponents under the weight of as complete an expression of public opinion as possible. Rumours are getting about the town; our announcement about the purchase of the property cannot be withheld any longer. It is imperative that this very evening—after songs and speeches, amidst the clink of glasses—in a word, in an ebullient atmosphere of festivity—you should inform them of the risk you have incurred for the good of the community. In such an ebullient atmosphere of festivity—as I just now described it—you can do an astonishing lot with the people here. But you must have that atmosphere, or the thing won't go.

Bernick. Yes, yes—

Rummel. And especially when so delicate and ticklish a point has to be negotiated. Well, thank goodness, you have a name that will be a tower of

strength, Bernick. But listen now; we must make our arrangements, to some extent. Mr. Hilmar Tönnesen has written an ode to you. It begins very charmingly with the words: "Raise the Ideal's banner high!" And Mr. Rörlund has undertaken the task of making the speech of the evening. Of course you must reply to that.

Bernick. I cannot to-night, Rummel. Couldn't you—?

Rummel. It is impossible, however willing I might be; because, as you can imagine, his speech will be especially addressed to you. Of course it is possible he may say a word or two about the rest of us; I have spoken to Vigeland and Sandstad about it. Our idea is that, in replying, you should propose the toast of "Prosperity to our Community"; Sandstad will say a few words on the subject of harmonious relations between the different strata of society; then Vigeland will express the hope that this new undertaking may not disturb the sound moral basis upon which our community stands; and I propose, in a few suitable words, to refer to the ladies, whose work for the community, though more inconspicuous, is far from being without its importance. But you are not listening to me—

Bernick. Yes—indeed I am. But, tell me, do you think there is a very heavy sea running outside?

Rummel. Why, are you nervous about the "Palm Tree"? She is fully insured, you know.

Bernick. Yes, she is insured; but—

Rummel. And in good repair—and that is the main thing.

Bernick. Hm—. Supposing anything does happen to a ship, it doesn't follow that human life will be in danger, does it? The ship and the cargo may be lost—and one might lose one's boxes and papers—

Rummel. Good Lord—boxes and papers are not of much consequence.

Bernick. Not of much consequence! No, no; I only meant—. Hush—I hear voices again.

Rummel. It is on board the "Palm Tree."

(VIGELAND *comes in from the right.*)

Vigeland. Yes, they are just towing the "Palm Tree" out. Good evening, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. And you, as a seafaring man, are still of opinion that—

Vigeland. I put my trust in Providence, Mr. Bernick. Moreover, I have been on board myself and distributed a few small tracts which I hope may carry a blessing with them.

(SANDSTAD *and* KRAP *come in from the right.*)

Sandstad (*to some one at the door*). Well, if that gets through all right, anything will. (*Comes in.*) Ah, good evening, good evening!

Bernick. Is anything the matter, Krap?

Krap. I say nothing, Mr. Bernick.

Sandstad. The entire crew of the "Indian Girl" are drunk; I will stake my reputation on it that they won't come out of it alive. (LONA *comes in from the right.*)

Lona. Ah, now I can say his good-byes for him.

Bernick. Is he on board already?

Lona. He will be directly, at any rate. We parted outside the hotel.

Bernick. And he persists in his intention?

Lona. As firm as a rock.

Rummel (*who is fumbling at the window*). Confound these new-fangled contrivances; I cannot get the curtains drawn.

Lona. Do you want them drawn? I thought, on the contrary—

Rummel. Yes, drawn at first, Miss Hessel. You know what is in the wind, I suppose?

Lona. Yes. Let me help you. (*Takes hold of the cords.*) I will draw down the curtains on my brother-in-law—though I would much rather draw them up.

Rummel. You can do that too, later on. When the garden is filled with a surging crowd, then the curtains shall be drawn back, and they will be able to look in upon a surprised and happy family. Citizens' lives should be such that they can live in glass houses! (BERNICK *opens his mouth, as though he were going*

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to say something; but he turns hurriedly away and goes into his room.)

Rummel. Come along, let us have a final consultation. Come in, too, Mr. Krap; you must assist us with information on one or two points of detail. (*All the men go into* BERNICK'S *room.* LONA *has drawn the curtains over the windows, and is just going to do the same over the open glass door, when* OLAF *jumps down from the room above on to the garden steps; he has a wrap over his shoulders and a bundle in his hand.*

Lona. Bless me, child, how you frightened me!

Olaf (*hiding his bundle*). Hush, aunt!

Lona. Did you jump out of the window? Where are you going?

Olaf. Hush!—don't say anything. I want to go to Uncle Johan—only on to the quay, you know—only to say good-bye to him. Good-night, aunt! (*Runs out through the garden.*)

Lona. No—stop! Olaf—Olaf!

(JOHAN, *dressed for his journey, with a bag over his shoulder, comes warily in by the door on the right.*)

Johan. Lona!

Lona (*turning round*). What! Back again?

Johan. I have still a few minutes. I must see her once more; we cannot part like this. (*The farther door on the left opens, and* MARTHA *and* DINA, *both with cloaks on, and the latter carrying a small travelling-bag in her hand, come in.*)

Dina. Let me go to him! Let me go to him!

Martha. Yes, you shall go to him, Dina!

Dina. There he is!

Johan. Dina!

Dina. Take me with you!

Johan. What—!

Lona. You mean it?

Dina. Yes, take me with you. The other has written to me that he means to announce to every one this evening—

Johan. Dina—you do not love him?

Dina. I have never loved the man! I would rather drown myself in the fjord than be engaged to him! Oh, and he humiliated me yesterday with his condescending manner! How clear he made it that he felt he was lifting up a poor despised creature to his own level! I do not mean to be despised any longer. I mean to go away. May I go with you?

Johan. Yes, yes—a thousand times, yes!

Dina. I will not be a burden to you long. Only help me to get over there; help me to go the right way about things at first—

Johan. Hurrah, it is all right after all, Dina!

Lona (*pointing to* BERNICK'S *door*). Hush!—gently, gently!

Johan. Dina, I shall look after you.

Dina. I am not going to let you do that. I mean to look after myself; over there, I am sure I can do that. Only let me get away from here. Oh, these women!—you don't know—they have written to me to-day, too—exhorting me to realise my good fortune—impressing on me how magnanimous he has been. To-morrow, and every day afterwards, they would be watching me to see if I were making myself worthy of it all. I am sick and tired of all this goodiness!

Johan. Tell me, Dina—is that the only reason you are coming away? Am I nothing to you?

Dina. Yes, Johan, you are more to me than any one else in the world.

Johan. Oh, Dina—!

Dina. Every one here tells me I ought to hate and detest you—that it is my duty; but I cannot see that it is my duty, and shall never be able to.

Lona. No more you shall, my dear!

Martha. No, indeed you shall not; and that is why you shall go with him as his wife.

Johan. Yes, yes!

Lona. What? Give me a kiss, Martha. I never expected that from *you!*

Martha. No, I dare say not; I would not have expected it myself. But I was bound to break out

some time! Ah, what we suffer under the tyranny of habit and custom! Make a stand against that, Dina. Be his wife. Let me see you defy all this convention.

Johan. What is your answer, Dina?

Dina. Yes, I will be your wife.

Johan. Dina!

Dina. But first of all I want to work—to make something of myself—as you have done. I am not going to be merely a thing that is taken.

Lona. Quite right—that is the way.

Johan. Very well; I shall wait and hope——

Lona. And win, my boy! But now you must get on board!

Johan. Yes, on board! Ah, Lona, my dear sister, just one word with you. Look here— (*He takes her into the background and talks hurriedly to her.*)

Martha. Dina, you lucky girl, let me look at you, and kiss you once more—for the last time.

Dina. Not for the last time; no, my darling aunt, we shall meet again.

Martha. Never! Promise me, Dina, never to come back! (*Grasps her hands and looks at her.*) Now go to your happiness, my dear child—across the sea. How often, in my schoolroom, I have yearned to be over there! It must be beautiful; the skies are loftier than here—a freer air plays about your head—

Dina. Oh, Aunt Martha, some day you will follow us.

Martha. I? Never—never. I have my little vocation here, and now I really believe I can live to the full the life that I ought.

Dina. I cannot imagine being parted from you.

Martha. Ah, one can part from much, Dina. (*Kisses her.*) But I hope you may never experience that, my sweet child. Promise me to make him happy.

Dina. I will promise nothing; I hate promises; things must happen as they will.

Martha. Yes, yes, that is true; only remain what you are—true and faithful to yourself.

Dina. I will, aunt.

Lona (*putting into her pocket some papers that* JOHAN

has given her). Splendid, splendid, my dear boy. But now you must be off.

Johan. Yes, we have no time to waste now. Good-bye, Lona, and thank you for all your love. Good-bye, Martha, and thank you, too, for your loyal friendship.

Martha. Good-bye, Johan! Good-bye, Dina! And may you be happy all your lives! (*She and* LONA *hurry them to the door at the back.* JOHAN *and* DINA *go quickly down the steps and through the garden.* LONA *shuts the door and draws the curtains over it.*

Lona. Now we are alone, Martha. You have lost her and I him.

Martha. You—lost him?

Lona. Oh, I had already half lost him over there. The boy was longing to stand on his own feet; that was why I pretended to be suffering from home-sickness.

Martha. So that was it? Ah, then I understand why you came. But he will want you back, Lona.

Lona. An old step-sister—what use will he have for her now? Men break many very dear ties to win their happiness.

Martha. That sometimes is so.

Lona. But we two will stick together, Martha.

Martha. Can I be anything to you?

Lona. Who more so? We two foster-sisters—haven't we both lost our children? Now we are alone.

Martha. Yes, alone. And therefore you ought to know this too—I loved him more than anything in the world.

Lona. Martha! (*Grasps her by the arm.*) Is that true?

Martha. All my existence lies in those words. I have loved him and waited for him. Every summer I waited for him to come. And then he came—but he had no eyes for me.

Lona. You loved him! And it was you yourself that put his happiness into his hands.

Martha. Ought I not to be the one to put his happiness into his hands, since I loved him? Yes, I have loved him. All my life has been for him, ever

since he went away. What reascn had I to hope, you mean? Oh, I think I had some reason, all the same. But when he came back—then it seemed as if everything had been wiped out of his memory. He had no eyes for me.

Lona. It was Dina that overshadowed you, Martha?

Martha. And it is a good thing she did. At the time he went away, we were of the same age; but when I saw him again—oh, that dreadful moment!—I realised that now I was ten years older than he. He had gone out into the bright sparkling sunshine, and breathed in youth and health with every breath; and here I sat meanwhile, spinning and spinning—

Lona. Spinning the thread of his happiness, Martha.

Martha. Yes, it was a golden thread I spun. No bitterness! We have been two good sisters to him, haven't we, Lona?

Lona (*throwing her arms round her*). Martha!

(BERNICK *comes in from his room.*)

Bernick (*to the other men, who are in his room*). Yes, yes, arrange it any way you please. When the time comes, I shall be able to—. (*Shuts the door.*) Ah, you are here. Look here, Martha—I think you had better change your dress; and tell Betty to do the same. I don't want anything elaborate, of course—something homely, but neat. But you must make haste.

Lona. And a bright, cheerful face, Martha; your eyes must look happy.

Bernick. Olaf is to come downstairs too; I will have him beside me.

Lona. Hm! Olaf—

Martha. I will give Betty your message. (*Goes out by the farther door on the left.*)

Lona. Well, the great and solemn moment is at hand.

Bernick (*walking uneasily up and down*). Yes, it is.

Lona. At such a moment I should think a man would feel proud and happy.

Bernick (*looking at her*). Hm!

Lona. I hear the whole town is to be illuminated.

Bernick. Yes, they have some idea of that sort.

Lona. All the different clubs will assemble with their banners—your name will blaze out in letters of fire—to-night the telegraph will flash the news to every part of the country: "In the bosom of his happy family, Mr. Bernick received the homage of his fellow-citizens as one of the pillars of society."

Bernick. That is so; and they will begin to cheer outside, and the crowd will shout in front of my house until I shall be obliged to go out and bow to them and thank them.

Lona. Obliged to?

Bernick. Do you suppose I shall feel happy at that moment?

Lona. No, I don't suppose you will feel so very happy.

Bernick. Lona, you despise me.

Lona. Not yet.

Bernick. And you have no right to; no right to *despise* me! Lona, you can have no idea how utterly alone I stand in this cramped and stunted community—where I have had, year after year, to stifle my ambition for a fuller life. My work may seem many-sided, but what have I really accomplished? Odds and ends—scraps. They would not stand anything else here. If I were to go a step in advance of the opinions and views that are current at the moment, I should lose all my influence. Do you know what we are—we who are looked upon as pillars of society? We are nothing more nor less than the tools of society.

Lona. Why have you only begun to realise that now?

Bernick. Because I have been thinking a great deal lately—since you came back—and this evening I have thought more seriously than ever before. Oh, Lona, why did not I really know you then—in the old days, I mean?

Lona. And if you had?

Bernick. I should never have let you go; and, if I had had you, I should not be in the position I am in to-night.

Lona. And do you never consider what *she* might

have been to you—she whom you chose in my place?

Bernick. I know, at all events, that she has been nothing to me of what I needed.

Lona. Because you have never shared your interests with her; because you have never allowed her full and frank exchange of thoughts with you; because you have allowed her to be borne under by self-reproach for the shame you cast upon one who was dear to her.

Bernick. Yes, yes; it all comes from lying and deceit.

Lona. Then why not break with all this lying and deceit?

Bernick. Now? It is too late now, Lona.

Lona. Karsten, tell me—what gratification does all this show and deception bring you?

Bernick. It brings *me* none. I must disappear some day, and all this community of bunglers with me. But a generation is growing up that will follow us; it is my son that I work for—I am providing a career for *him*. There will come a time when truth will enter into the life of the community, and on that foundation he shall build up a happier existence than his father.

Lona. With a lie at the bottom of it all? Consider what sort of an inheritance it is that you are leaving to your son.

Bernick (*in tones of suppressed despair*). It is a thousand times worse than you think. But surely some day the curse must be lifted; and yet—nevertheless—. (*Vehemently.*) How could I bring all this upon my own head! Still, it is done now; I must go on with it now. You *shall* not succeed in crushing me! (HILMAR *comes in hurriedly and agitatedly from the right, with an open letter in his hand.*)

Hilmar. But this is—. Betty, Betty!

Bernick. What is the matter? Are they coming already?

Hilmar. No, no—but I must speak to some one immediately. (*Goes out through the farther door on the left.*)

Lona. Karsten, you talk about our having come here

to crush you. So let me tell you what sort of stuff this prodigal son, whom your moral community shuns as if he had the plague, is made of. He can do without any of you—for he is away now.

Bernick. But he said he meant to come back—

Lona. Johan will never come back. He is gone for good, and Dina with him.

Bernick. Never come back?—and Dina with him?

Lona. Yes, to be his wife. That is how these two strike your virtuous community in the face, just as I did once—but never mind that.

Bernick. Gone—and she too—in the "Indian Girl"—

Lona. No; he would not trust so precious a freight to that rascally crew. Johan and Dina are on the "Palm Tree."

Bernick. Ah! Then it is all in vain— (*Goes hurriedly to the door of his room, opens it and calls in.*) Krap, stop the "Indian Girl"—she must not sail to-night!

Krap (*from within*). The "Indian Girl" is already standing out to sea, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick (*shutting the door and speaking faintly*). Too late—and all to no purpose—

Lona. What do you mean?

Bernick. Nothing, nothing. Leave me alone!

Lona. Hm!—look here, Karsten. Johan was good enough to say that he entrusted to me the good name and reputation that he once lent to you, and also the good name that you stole from him while he was away. Johan will hold his tongue; and I can act just as I please in the matter. See, I have two letters in my hand.

Bernick. You have got them! And you mean now—this very evening—perhaps when the procession comes—

Lona. I did not come back here to betray you, but to stir your conscience so that you should speak of your own free will. I did not succeed in doing that—so you must remain as you are, with your life founded upon a lie. Look, I am tearing your two letters in

pieces. Take the wretched things—there you are. Now there is no evidence against you, Karsten. You are safe now; be happy, too—if you can.

Bernick (*much moved*). Lona—why did you not do that sooner! Now it is too late; life no longer seems good to me; I cannot live on after to-day.

Lona. What has happened?

Bernick. Do not ask me— But I *must* live on, nevertheless! I *will* live—for Olaf's sake. He shall make amends for everything—expiate everything—

Lona. Karsten—! (HILMAR *comes hurriedly back.*)

Hilmar. I cannot find any one; they are all out—even Betty!

Bernick. What is the matter with you?

Hilmar. I daren't tell you.

Bernick. What is it? You *must* tell me!

Hilmar. Very well—Olaf has run away on board the "Indian Girl."

Bernick (*stumbling back*). Olaf—on board the "Indian Girl"! No, no!

Lona. Yes, he is! Now I understand—I saw him jump out of the window.

Bernick (*calls in through the door of his room in a despairing voice*). Krap, stop the "Indian Girl" at any cost!

Krap. It is impossible, sir. How can you suppose—?

Bernick. We *must* stop her; Olaf is on board!

Krap. What!

Rummel (*coming out of* BERNICK'S *room*). Olaf run away? Impossible!

Sandstad (*following him*). He will be sent back with the pilot, Mr. Bernick.

Hilmar. No, no; he has written to me. (*Shows the letter.*) He says he means to hide among the cargo till they are in the open sea.

Bernick. I shall never see him again!

Rummel. What nonsense!—a good strong ship, newly repaired—

Vigeland (*who has followed the others out of* BERNICK'S *room*). And in your own yard, Mr. Bernick!

Bernick. I shall never see him again, I tell you. I

have lost him, Lona; and—I see it now—he never was really mine. (*Listens.*) What is that?

Rummel. Music. The procession must be coming.

Bernick. I cannot take any part in it—I will not.

Rummel. What are you thinking of! That is impossible.

Sandstad. Impossible, Mr. Bernick; think what you have at stake.

Bernick. What does it all matter to me now? What have I to work for now?

Rummel. Can you ask? You have us and the community.

Vigeland. Quite true.

Sandstad. And surely, Mr. Bernick, you have not forgotten that we—. (MARTHA *comes in through the farther door to the left. Music is heard in the distance, down the street.*)

Martha. The procession is just coming, but Betty is not in the house. I don't understand where she—

Bernick. Not in the house! There, you see, Lona—no support to me, either in gladness or in sorrow.

Rummel. Draw back the curtains! Come and help me, Mr. Krap—and you, Mr. Sandstad. It is a thousand pities that the family should not be united just now; it is quite contrary to the programme. (*They draw back all the curtains. The whole street is seen to be illuminated. Opposite the house is a large transparency, bearing the words:* "Long live Karsten Bernick, Pillar of our Society"!

Bernick (*shrinking back*). Take all that away! I don't want to see it! Put it out, put it out!

Rummel. Excuse me, Mr. Bernick, but are you not well?

Martha. What is the matter with him, Lona?

Lona. Hush! (*Whispers to her.*)

Bernick. Take away those mocking words, I tell you! Can't you see that all these lights are grinning at us?

Rummel. Well, really, I must confess—

Bernick. Oh, how could you understand—! But I, I—! It is all like candles in a dead-room!

Rummel. Well, let me tell you that you are taking the thing a great deal too seriously.

Sandstad. The boy will enjoy a trip across the Atlantic, and then you will have him back.

Vigeland. Only put your trust in the Almighty, Mr. Bernick.

Rummel. And in the vessel, Bernick; it is not likely to sink, I know.

Krap. Hm—

Rummel. Now if it were one of those floating coffins that one hears are sent out by men in the bigger countries—

Bernick. I am sure my hair must be turning grey! (MRS. BERNICK *comes in from the garden, with a shawl thrown over her head.*)

Mrs. Bernick. Karsten, Karsten, do you know—?

Bernick. Yes, I know; but you—you, who see nothing that is going on—you, who have no mother's eyes for your son—!

Mrs. Bernick. Listen to me, do!

Bernick. Why did you not look after him? Now I have lost him. Give him back to me, if you can.

Mrs. Bernick. I can! I have got him!

Bernick. You have got him!

The Men. Ah!

Hilmar. Yes, I thought so.

Martha. You have got him back, Karsten!

Lona. Yes—make him your own, now.

Bernick. You have got him! Is that true? Where is he?

Mrs. Bernick. I shall not tell you, till you have forgiven him.

Bernick. Forgiven! But how did you know—?

Mrs. Bernick. Do you not think a mother sees? I was in mortal fear of your getting to know anything about it. Some words he let fall yesterday—and then his room was empty, and his knapsack and clothes missing—

Bernick. Yes, yes?

Mrs. Bernick. I ran, and got hold of Aune; we went out in his boat; the American ship was on the point

of sailing. Thank God, we were in time—got on board—searched the hold—found him! Oh, Karsten, you must not punish him!

Bernick. Betty!

Mrs. Bernick. Nor Aune, either!

Bernick. Aune? What do you know about him? Is the "Indian Girl" under sail again?

Mrs. Bernick. No, that is just it.

Bernick. Speak, speak!

Mrs. Bernick. Aune was just as agitated as I was; the search took us some time; it had grown dark, and the pilot made objections; and so Aune took upon himself—in your name—

Bernick. Well?

Mrs. Bernick. To stop the ship's sailing till to-morrow.

Krap. Hm—

Bernick. Oh, how glad I am!

Mrs. Bernick. You are not angry?

Bernick. I cannot tell you how glad I am, Betty!

Rummel. You really take things far too seriously.

Hilmar. Oh yes, as soon as it is a question of a little struggle with the elements—ugh!

Krap (*going to the window*). The procession is just coming through your garden gate, Mr. Bernick.

Bernick. Yes, they can come now.

Rummel. The whole garden is full of people.

Sandstad. The whole street is crammed.

Rummel. The whole town is afoot, Bernick. It really is a moment that makes one proud.

Vigeland. Let us take it in a humble spirit, Mr. Rummel.

Rummel. All the banners are out! What a procession! Here comes the committee, with Mr. Rörlund at their head.

Bernick. Yes, let them come in!

Rummel. But, Bernick—in your present agitated frame of mind—

Bernick. Well, what?

Rummel. I am quite willing to speak instead of you, if you like.

Bernick. No, thank you; I will speak for myself to-night.

Rummel. But are you sure you know what to say?

Bernick. Yes, make your mind easy, Rummel—I know now what to say. (*The music grows louder. The verandah door is opened.* RÖRLUND *comes in, at the head of the Committee, escorted by a couple of hired waiters, who carry a covered basket. They are followed by townspeople of all classes, as many as can get into the room. An apparently endless crowd of people, waving banners and flags, are visible in the garden and the street.*)

Rörlund. Mr. Bernick! I see, from the surprise depicted upon your face, that it is as unexpected guests that we are intruding upon your happy family circle and your peaceful fireside, where we find you surrounded by honoured and energetic fellow-citizens and friends. But it is our hearts that have bidden us come to offer you our homage—not for the first time, it is true, but for the first time on such a comprehensive scale. We have on many occasions given you our thanks for the broad moral foundation upon which you have, so to speak, reared the edifice of our community. On this occasion we offer our homage especially to the clear-sighted, indefatigable, unselfish—nay, self-sacrificing—citizen who has taken the initiative in an undertaking which, we are assured on all sides, will give a powerful impetus to the temporal prosperity and welfare of our community.

Voices. Bravo, bravo!

Rörlund. You, sir, have for many years been a shining example in our midst. This is not the place for me to speak of your family life, which has been a model to us all; still less to enlarge upon your unblemished personal character. Such topics belong to the stillness of a man's own chamber, not to a festal occasion such as this! I am here to speak of your public life as a citizen, as it lies open to all men's eyes. Well-equipped vessels sail away from your shipyard and carry our flag far and wide over the seas. A numerous and happy band of workmen look up to

you as to a father. By calling new branches of industry into existence, you have laid the foundations of the welfare of hundreds of families. In a word—you are, in the fullest sense of the term, the mainstay of our community.

Voices. Hear, hear! Bravo!

Rörlund. And, sir, it is just that disinterestedness, which colours all your conduct, that is so beneficial to our community—more so than words can express—and especially at the present moment. You are now on the point of procuring for us what I have no hesitation in calling bluntly by its prosaic name—a railway!

Voices. Bravo, bravo!

Rörlund. But it would seem as though the undertaking were beset by certain difficulties, the outcome of narrow and selfish considerations.

Voices. Hear, hear!

Rörlund. For the fact has come to light that certain individuals, who do not belong to our community, have stolen a march upon the hard-working citizens of this place, and have laid hands on certain sources of profit which by rights should have fallen to the share of our town.

Voices. That's right! Hear, hear!

Rörlund. This regrettable fact has naturally come to your knowledge also, Mr. Bernick. But it has not had the slightest effect in deterring you from proceeding steadily with your project, well knowing that a patriotic man should not solely take local interests into consideration.

Voices. Oh!—No, no!—Yes, yes!

Rörlund. It is to such a man—to the patriot citizen, whose character we all should emulate—that we bring our homage this evening. May your undertaking grow to be a real and lasting source of good fortune to this community! It is true enough that a railway may be the means of our exposing ourselves to the incursion of pernicious influences from without; but it gives us also the means of quickly expelling them from within. For even we, at the present time, cannot boast of being entirely free from the danger of such outside influences;

but as we have, on this very evening—if rumour is to be believed—fortunately got rid of certain elements of that nature, sooner than was to be expected—

Voices. Order, order!

Rörlund.—I regard the occurrence as a happy omen for our undertaking. My alluding to such a thing at such a moment only emphasises the fact that the house in which we are now standing is one where the claims of morality are esteemed even above ties of family.

Voices. Hear, hear! Bravo!

Bernick (at the same moment). Allow me—

Rörlund. I have only a few more words to say, Mr. Bernick. What you have done for your native place we all know has not been done with any underlying idea of its bringing tangible profit to yourself. But, nevertheless, you must not refuse to accept a slight token of grateful appreciation at the hands of your fellow-citizens—least of all at this important moment when, according to the assurances of practical men, we are standing on the threshold of a new era.

Voices. Bravo! Hear, hear!

(RÖRLUND *signs to the servants, who bring forward the basket. During the following speech, members of the Committee take out and present the various objects mentioned.*)

Rörlund. And so, Mr. Bernick, we have the pleasure of presenting you with this silver coffee-service. Let it grace your board when in the future, as so often in the past, we have the happiness of being assembled under your hospitable roof.

You, too, gentlemen, who have so generously seconded the leader of our community, we ask to accept a small souvenir. This silver goblet is for you, Mr. Rummel. Many a time have you, amidst the clink of glasses, defended the interests of your fellow-citizens in well-chosen words; may you often find similar worthy opportunities to raise and empty this goblet in some patriotic toast! To you, Mr. Sandstad, I present this album containing photographs of your fellow-citizens. Your well-known and conspicuous liberality has put you in the pleasant position of being able to number your

friends amongst all classes of society. And to you, Mr. Vigeland, I have to offer this book of Family Devotions, printed on vellum and handsomely bound, to grace your . udy table. The mellowing influence of time has led you to take an earnest view of life; your zeal in carrying out your daily duties has, for a long period of years, been purified and ennobled by thoughts of higher and holier things. (*Turns to the crowd.*) And now, friends, three cheers for Mr. Bernick and his fellow-workers! Three cheers for the Pillars of our Society!

The whole crowd. Bernick! Pillars of Society! Hurrah—hurrah—hurrah!

Lona. I congratulate you, brother-in-law!

(*An expectant hush follows.*)

Bernick (*speaking seriously and slowly*). Fellow citizens—your spokesman said just now that to-night we are standing on the threshold of a new era. I hope that will prove to be the case. But before that can come to pass, we must lay fast hold of *truth*—truth which, till to-night, has been altogether and in all circumstances a stranger to this community of ours. (*Astonishment among the audience.*) To that end, I must begin by deprecating the praises with which you, Mr. Rörlund, according to custom on such occasions, have overwhelmed me. I do not deserve them; because, until to-day, my actions have by no means been disinterested. Even though I may not always have aimed at pecuniary profit, I at all events recognise now that a craving for power, influence and position has been the moving spirit of most of my actions.

Rummel (*half aloud*). What next!

Bernick. Standing before my fellow citizens, I do not reproach myself for that; because I still think I am entitled to a place in the front rank of our capable men of affairs.

Voices. Yes, yes, yes!

Bernick. But what I charge myself with is that I have so often been weak enough to resort to deceitfulness, because I knew and feared the tendency of the community to espy unclean motives behind everything

a prominent man here undertakes. And now I am coming to a point which will illustrate that.

Rummel (*uneasily*). Hm—hm!

Bernick. There have been rumours of extensive purchases of property outside the town. These purchases have been made by me—by me alone, and by no one else. (*Murmurs are heard:* "What does he say?—He?—Bernick?") The properties are, for the time being, in my hands. Naturally I have confided in my fellow-workers, Mr. Rummel, Mr. Vigeland and Mr. Sandstad, and we are all agreed that—

Rummel. It is not true! Prove it—prove it!

Vigeland. We are not all agreed about anything!

Sandstad. Well, really I must say—!

Bernick. That is quite true—we are not yet agreed upon the matter I was going to mention. But I confidently hope that these three gentlemen will agree with me when I announce to you that I have to-night come to the decision that these properties shall be exploited as a company of which the shares shall be offered for public subscription; any one that wishes can take shares.

Voices. Hurrah! Three cheers for Bernick!

Rummel (*in a low voice, to* BERNICK). This is the basest treachery—!

Sandstad (*also in an undertone*). So you have been fooling us—!

Vigeland. Well, then, devil take—! Good Lord, what am I saying? (*Cheers are heard without.*)

Bernick. Silence, gentlemen. I have no right to this homage you offer me; because the decision I have just come to does not represent what was my first intention. My intention was to keep the whole thing for myself; and, even now, I am of opinion that these properties would be worked to best advantage if they remained in one man's hands. But you are at liberty to choose. If you wish it, I am willing to administer them to the best of my abilities.

Voices. Yes, yes, yes!

Bernick. But, first of all, my fellow-townsmen must know me thoroughly. And let each man seek to know

himself thoroughly, too; and so let it really come to pass that to-night we begin a new era. The old era—with its affectation, its hypocrisy and its emptiness, its pretence of virtue and its miserable fear of public opinion—shall be for us like a museum, open for purposes of instruction; and to that museum we will present—shall we not, gentlemen?—the coffee service, and the goblet, and the album, and the Family Devotions printed on vellum and handsomely bound.

Rummel. Oh, of course.

Vigeland (*muttering*). If you have taken everything else, then—

Sandstad. By all means.

Bernick. And now for the principal reckoning I have to make with the community. Mr. Rörlund said that certain pernicious elements had left us this evening. I can add what you do not yet know. The man referred to did not go away alone, with him, to become his wife, went—

Lona (*loudly*). Dina Dorf!

Rörlund. What?

Mrs. Bernick. What? (*Great commotion.*)

Rörlund. Fled? Run away—with him! Impossible!

Bernick. To become his wife, Mr. Rörlund. And I will add more. (*In a low voice, to his wife.*) Betty, be strong to bear what is coming. (*Aloud.*) This is what I have to say: hats off to that man, for he has nobly taken another's guilt upon his shoulders. My friends, I want to have done with falsehood; it has very nearly poisoned every fibre of my being. You shall know all. Fifteen years ago, *I* was the guilty man.

Mrs. Bernick (*softly and tremblingly*). Karsten!

Martha (*similarly*). Ah, Johan—!

Lona. Now at last you have found yourself!

(*Speechless consternation among the audience.*)

Bernick. Yes, friends, I was the guilty one, and he went away. The vile and lying rumours that were spread abroad afterwards, it is beyond human power to refute now; but I have no right to complain of that. For fifteen years I have climbed up the ladder of success

by the help of those rumours; whether now they are to cast me down again, or not, each of you must decide in his own mind.

Rörlund. What a thunderbolt! Our leading citizen—! (*In a low voice, to* BETTY.) How sorry I am for you, Mrs. Bernick!

Hilmar. What a confession! Well, I must say—!

Bernick. But come to no decision to-night. I entreat every one to go home—to collect his thoughts—to look into his own heart. When once more you can think calmly, then it will be seen whether I have lost or won by speaking out. Good-bye! I have still much —very much—to repent of; but that concerns my own conscience only. Good-night! Take away all these signs of rejoicing. We must all feel that they are out of place here.

Rörlund. That they certainly are. (*In an undertone to* MRS. BERNICK.) Run away! So then she was completely unworthy of me. (*Louder, to the Committee.*) Yes, gentlemen, after this I think we had better disperse as quietly as possible.

Hilmar. How, after this, any one is to manage to hold the Ideal's banner high—. Ugh!

(*Meantime the news has been whispered from mouth to mouth. The crowd gradually disperses from the garden.* RUMMEL, SANDSTAD *and* VIGELAND *go out, arguing eagerly but in a low voice.* HILMAR *slinks away to the right. When silence is restored, there only remain in the room* BERNICK, MRS. BERNICK, MARTHA, LONA *and* KRAP.)

Bernick. Betty, can you forgive me?

Mrs. Bernick (*looking at him with a smile*). Do you know, Karsten, that you have opened out for me the happiest prospect I have had for many a year?

Bernick. How?

Mrs. Bernick. For many years I have felt that once you were mine and that I had lost you. Now I know that you never have been mine yet; but I shall win you.

Bernick (*folding her in his arms*). Oh, Betty, you

have won me. It was through Lona that I first learnt really to know you. But now let Olaf come to me.

Mrs. Bernick. Yes, you shall have him now. Mr. Krap—! (*Talks softly to* KRAP *in the background. He goes out by the garden door. During what follows the illuminations and lights in the houses are gradually extinguished.*)

Bernick (*in a low voice*). Thank you, Lona—you have saved what was best in me—and for me.

Lona. Do you suppose I wanted to do anything else?

Bernick. Yes, was that so—or not? I cannot quite make you out.

Lona. Hm—

Bernick. Then it was not hatred? Not revenge? Why did you come back, then?

Lona. Old friendship does not rust.

Bernick. Lona!

Lona. When Johan told me about the lie, I swore to myself that the hero of my youth should stand free and true.

Bernick. What a wretch I am!—and how little I have deserved it of you!

Lona. Oh, if we women always looked for what we deserve, Karsten—! (AUNE *comes in with* OLAF *from the garden.*)

Bernick (*going to meet them*). Olaf!

Olaf. Father, I promise I will never do it again—

Bernick. Never run away?

Olaf. Yes, yes, I promise you, father.

Bernick. And I promise you, you shall never have reason to. For the future you shall be allowed to grow up, not as the heir to *my* life's work, but as one who has his own life's work before him.

Olaf. And shall I be allowed to be what I like, when I grow up?

Bernick. Yes.

Olaf. Oh, thank you! Then I won't be a pillar of society.

Bernick. No? Why not?

Olaf. No—I think it must be so dull.

Bernick. You shall be yourself, Olaf; the rest may take care of itself.—And you, Aune—

Aune. I know, Mr. Bernick; I am dismissed.

Bernick. We remain together, Aune; and forgive me—

Aune. What? The ship has not sailed to-night.

Bernick. Nor will it sail to-morrow, either. I gave you too short grace. It must be looked to more thoroughly.

Aune. It shall, Mr. Bernick—and with the new machines!

Bernick. By all means—but thoroughly and conscientiously. There are many among us who need thorough and conscientious repairs, Aune. Well, good-night.

Aune. Good-night, sir—and thank you, thank you. (*Goes out.*)

Mrs. Bernick. Now they are all gone.

Bernick. And we are alone. My name is not shining in letters of fire any longer; all the lights in the windows are out.

Lona. Would you wish them lit again?

Bernick. Not for anything in the world. Where have I been! You would be horrified if you knew. I feel now as if I had come back to my right senses, after being poisoned. But I feel this—that I *can* be young and healthy again. Oh, come nearer—come closer round me. Come, Betty! Come, Olaf, my boy! And you, Martha—it seems to me as if I had never seen you all these years.

Lona. No, I can believe that. Your commun[illegible] a community of bachelor souls; you do not see wo[illegible]

Bernick. That is quite true; and for that very re[illegible] —this is a bargain, Lona—you must not leave Betty and me.

Mrs. Bernick. No, Lona, you must not.

Lona. No, how could I have the heart to go away and leave you young people who are just setting up housekeeping? Am I not your foster-mother? You and I, Martha, the two old aunts—. What are you looking at?

Martha. Look how the sky is clearing, and how light it is over the sea. The "Palm Tree" is going to be lucky.

Lona. It carries its good luck on board.

Bernick. And we—we have a long earnest day of work ahead of us; I most of all. But let it come; only keep close round me, you true, loyal women. I have learnt *this* too, in these last few days; it is you women that are the pillars of society.

Lona. You have learnt a poor sort of wisdom, then, brother-in-law. (*Lays her hand firmly upon his shoulder.*) No, my friend; the spirit of truth and the spirit of freedom—they are the pillars of society.

ROSMERSHOLM

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

John Rosmer, of Rosmersholm, an ex-clergyman.
Rebecca West, one of his household, originally engaged as companion to the late Mrs. Rosmer.
Kroll, headmaster of the local grammar school, Rosmer's brother-in-law.
Ulrik Brendel.
Peter Mortensgaard.
Mrs. Helseth, Rosmer's housekeeper.

(*The action takes place at Rosmersholm, an old manor-house in the neighbourhood of a small town on a fjord in western Norway.*)

ACT I

(SCENE.—*The sitting-room at Rosmersholm; a spacious room, comfortably furnished in old-fashioned style. In the foreground, against the right-hand wall, is a stove decorated with sprigs of fresh birch and wild flowers. Farther back, a door. In the back wall folding doors leading into the entrance hall. In the left-hand wall a window, in front of which is a stand filled with flowers and plants. Near the stove stand a table, a couch and an easy-chair. The walls are hung round with portraits, dating from various periods, of clergymen, military officers and other officials in uniform. The window is open, and so are the doors into the lobby and the outer door. Through the latter is seen an avenue of old trees leading to a courtyard. It is a summer evening, after sunset.* REBECCA WEST *is sitting by the window crocheting a large white woollen shawl, which is nearly completed. From time to time she peeps out of window through the flowers.* MRS. HELSETH *comes in from the right.*)

Mrs. Helseth. Hadn't I better begin and lay the table for supper, miss?

Rebecca. Yes, do. Mr. Rosmer ought to be in directly.

Mrs. Helseth. Isn't there a draught where you are sitting, miss?

Rebecca. There is a little. Will you shut up, please? (MRS. HELSETH *goes to the hall door and shuts it. Then she goes to the window, to shut it, and looks out.*)

Mrs. Helseth. Isn't that Mr. Rosmer coming there?

Rebecca. Where? (*Gets up.*) Yes, it is he. (*Stands behind the window-curtain.*) Stand on one side. Don't let him catch sight of us.

Mrs. Helseth (*stepping back*). Look, miss—he is beginning to use the mill path again.

Rebecca. He came by the mill path the day before

yesterday too. (*Peeps out between the curtain and the window-frame*). Now we shall see whether—

Mrs. Helseth. Is he going over the wooden bridge?

Rebecca. That is just what I want to see. (*After a moment.*) No. He has turned aside. He is coming the other way round to-day too. (*Comes away from the window.*) It is a long way round.

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, of course. One can well understand his shrinking from going over that bridge. The spot where such a thing has happened is—

Rebecca (*folding up her work*). They cling to their dead a long time at Rosmersholm.

Mrs. Helseth. If you ask me, miss, I should say it is the dead that cling to Rosmersholm a long time.

Rebecca (*looking at her*). The dead?

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, one might almost say that they don't seem to be able to tear themselves away from those they have left behind.

Rebecca. What puts that idea into your head?

Mrs. Helseth. Well, otherwise I know the White Horses would not be seen here.

Rebecca. Tell me, Mrs. Helseth—what is this superstition about the White Horses?

Mrs. Helseth. Oh, it is not worth talking about. I am sure you don't believe in such things, either.

Rebecca. Do you believe in them?

Mrs. Helseth (*goes to the window and shuts it*). Oh, I am not going to give you a chance of laughing at me, miss. (*Looks out.*) See—is that not Mr. Rosmer out on the mill path again?

Rebecca (*looking out*). That man out there? (*Goes to the window.*) Why, that is Mr. Kroll, of course!

Mrs. Helseth. So it is, to be sure.

Rebecca. That is delightful, because he is certain to be coming here.

Mrs. Helseth. He actually comes straight over the wooden bridge, he does—for all that she was his own sister. Well, I will go in and get the supper laid, miss. (*Goes out to the right.* REBECCA *stands still for a moment, then waves her hand out of the window, nodding and smiling. Darkness is beginning to fall.*)

Rebecca (*going to the door on the right and calling*

through it). Mrs. Helseth, I am sure you won't mind preparing something extra nice for supper? You know what dishes Mr. Kroll is especially fond of.

Mrs. Helseth. Certainly, miss. I will.

Rebecca (*opening the door into the lobby*). At last, Mr. Kroll! I am so glad to see you!

Kroll (*coming into the lobby and putting down his stick*). Thank you. Are you sure I am not disturbing you?

Rebecca. You? How can you say such a thing?

Kroll (*coming into the room*). You are always so kind. (*Looks round the room.*) Is John up in his room?

Rebecca. No, he has gone out for a walk. He is later than usual of coming in, but he is sure to be back directly. (*Points to the sofa.*) Do sit down and wait for him.

Kroll (*putting down his hat*). Thank you. (*Sits down and looks about him.*) How charmingly pretty you have made the old room look! Flowers everywhere!

Rebecca. Mr. Rosmer is so fond of having fresh flowers about him.

Kroll. And so are you, I should say.

Rebecca. Yes, I am. I think their scent has such a delicious effect on one—and till lately we had to deny ourselves that pleasure, you know.

Kroll (*nodding slowly*). Poor Beata could not stand the scent of them.

Rebecca. Nor their colours either. They made her feel dazed.

Kroll. Yes, I remember. (*Continues in a more cheerful tone of voice*). Well, and how are things going here?

Rebecca. Oh, everything goes on in the same quiet, placid way. One day is exactly like another. And how are things with you? Is your wife—?

Kroll. Oh, my dear Miss West, don't let us talk about my affairs. In a family there is always something or other going awry—especially in such times as we live in now.

Rebecca (*after a short pause, sitting down in an easy-chair near the sofa*). Why have you never once been near us during the whole of your holidays?

Kroll. Oh, it doesn't do to be importunate, you know.

Rebecca. If you only knew how we have missed you—

Kroll. And, besides, I have been away, you know.

Rebecca. Yes, for a fortnight or so. I suppose you have been going the round of the public meetings?

Kroll (nods). Yes, what do you say to that? Would you ever have thought I would become a political agitator in my old age—eh?

Rebecca (smilingly). You have always been a little bit of an agitator, Mr. Kroll.

Kroll. Oh, yes; just for my own amusement. But for the future it is going to be in real earnest. Do you ever read the Radical newspapers?

Rebecca. Yes, I won't deny that I—

Kroll. My dear Miss West, there is no objection to that—not as far as you are concerned.

Rebecca. No, that is just what I think. I must follow the course of events—keep up with what is happening.

Kroll. Well, under any circumstances, I should never expect you, as a woman, to side actively with either party in the civic dispute—indeed one might more properly call it the civil war—that is raging here. I dare say you have read, then, the abuse these "nature's gentlemen" are pleased to shower upon me, and the scandalous coarseness they consider they are entitled to make use of?

Rebecca. Yes, but I think you have held your own pretty forcibly.

Kroll. That I have—though I say it. I have tasted blood now, and I will make them realise that I am not the sort of man to take it lying down—. (*Checks himself.*) No, no, do not let us get upon that sad and distressing topic this evening.

Rebecca. No, my dear Mr. Kroll, certainly not.

Kroll. Tell me, instead, how you find you get on at Rosmersholm, now that you are alone here—I mean, since our poor Beata—

Rebecca. Oh, thanks—I get on very well here. Her death has made a great gap in the house in many ways,

of course—and one misses her and grieves for her, naturally. But in other respects—

Kroll. Do you think you will remain here?—permanently, I mean?

Rebecca. Dear Mr. Kroll, I really never think about it at all. The fact is that I have become so thoroughly domesticated here that I almost feel as if I belonged to the place too.

Kroll. You? I should think you did!

Rebecca. And as long as Mr. Rosmer finds I can be any comfort or any use to him, I will gladly remain here, undoubtedly.

Kroll (*looking at her, with some emotion*). You know, there is something splendid about a woman's sacrificing the whole of her youth for others.

Rebecca. What else have I had to live for?

Kroll. At first when you came here there was your perpetual worry with that unreasonable cripple of a foster-father of yours—

Rebecca. You mustn't think that Dr. West was as unreasonable as that when we lived in Finmark. It was the trying journeys by sea that broke him up. But it is quite true that after we had moved here there were one or two hard years before his sufferings were over.

Kroll. Were not the years that followed even harder for you?

Rebecca. No; how can you say such a thing! I, who was so genuinely fond of Beata—! And she, poor soul, was so sadly in need of care and sympathetic companionship.

Kroll. You deserve to be thanked and rewarded for the forbearance with which you speak of her.

Rebecca (*moving a little nearer to him*). Dear Mr. Kroll, you say that so kindly and so sincerely that I feel sure you really bear me no ill-will.

Kroll. Ill-will? What do you mean?

Rebecca. Well, it would not be so very surprising if it were rather painful for you to see me, a stranger, doing just as I like here at Rosmersholm.

Kroll. How in the world could you think—!

Rebecca. Then it is not so? (*Holds out her hand to him.*) Thank you, Mr. Kroll; thank you for that.

Kroll. But what on earth could make you take such an idea into your head?

Rebecca. I began to be afraid it might be so, as you have so seldom been out here to see us lately.

Kroll. I can assure you, you have been on the wrong scent entirely, Miss West. And, in any case, the situation of affairs is unchanged in any essential point; because during the last sad years of poor Beata's life it was you and you alone, even then, that looked after everything here.

Rebecca. But it was more like a kind of regency in the wife's name.

Kroll. Whatever it was, I—. I will tell you what, Miss West; as far as I am concerned I should have nothing whatever to say against it if you—. But it doesn't do to say such things.

Rebecca. What things?

Kroll. Well, if it so happened that you were to step into the empty place—

Rebecca. I have the place I want, already, Mr. Kroll.

Kroll. Yes, as far as material benefits go; but not—

Rebecca (*interrupting him, in a serious voice*) For shame, Mr. Kroll! How can you sit there and jest about such things!

Kroll. Oh, well, I dare say our good John Rosmer thinks he has had more than enough of married life. But, all the same—

Rebecca. Really, you almost make me feel inclined to laugh at you.

Kroll. All the same—. Tell me, Miss West, if I may be allowed the question, how old are you?

Rebecca. I am ashamed to say I was twenty-one on my last birthday, Mr. Kroll. I am nearly thirty.

Kroll. Quite so. And Rosmer—how old is he? Let me see. He is five years younger than me, so he must be just about forty-three. It seems to me it would be very suitable.

Rebecca. No doubt, no doubt. It would be remarkably suitable.—Will you stop and have supper with us?

Kroll. Thank you. I had meant to pay you a good long visit, because there is a matter I want to talk over with our excellent friend.—Well, then, Miss West, to

prevent your taking foolish ideas into your head again, I will come out here again from time to time, as in the old days.

Rebecca. Yes, please do. (*Holds out her hand to him.*) Thank you, thank you! You are really uncommonly good-natured.

Kroll (*with a little grumble*). Am I? I can tell you that is more than they say at home. (ROSMER *comes in by the door on the right.*)

Rebecca. Mr. Rosmer, do you see who is sitting here?

Rosmer. Miss Helseth told me. (KROLL *gets up.*) I am so glad to see you here again, my dear fellow. (*Puts his hands on* KROLL'S *shoulders and looks him in the face.*) How pretty! I knew that one day we should be on our old footing again.

Kroll. My dear fellow, have you that insane idea in your head to that any thing could come between us?

Rebecca (*to* ROSMER). Isn't it delightful to think it was all our imagination!

Rosmer. Is that really true, Kroll? But why have you kept so obstinately away from us?

Kroll (*seriously, and in a subdued tone*). Because I did not want to come here like a living reminder of the unhappy time that is past—and of her whom we met her death in the mill-race.

Rosmer. It was a very kind thought on your part. You are always so considerate. But it was altogether unnecessary to keep away from us on that account. Come along, let us sit down on the sofa. (*They sit down.*) I can assure you it is not in the least painful for me to think about Beata. We talk about her every day. She seems to us to have a part in the house still.

Kroll. Does she really?

Rebecca (*lighting the lamp*). Yes, it is really quite true.

Rosmer. She really does. We both think so affectionately of her. And both Rebecca—both Miss West and I know in our hearts that we did all that lay in our power for the poor afflicted creature. We have nothing

to reproach ourselves with. That is why I feel there is something sweet and peaceful in the way we can think of Beata now.

Kroll. Ycu dear good people! In future I am coming out to see you every day.

Rebecca (*sitting down in an arm-chair*). Yes, let us see that you keep your word.

Rosmer (*with a slight hesitation*). I assure you, my dear fellow, my dearest wish would be that our intimacy should never suffer in any way. You know, you have seemed to be my natural adviser as long as we have known one another, even from my student days.

Kroll. I know, and I am very proud of the privilege. Is there by any chance anything in particular just now—?

Rosmer. There are a great many things that I want very much to talk over with you frankly—things that lie very near my heart.

Rebecca. I feel that is so, too, Mr. Rosmer. It seems to me it would be such a good thing if you two old friends—

Kroll. Well, I can assure you I have even more to talk over with you—because I have become an active politician, as I dare say you know.

Rosmer. Yes, I know you have. How did that come about?

Kroll. I had to, you see, whether I liked it or not. It became impossible for me to remain an idle spectator any longer. Now that the Radicals have become so distressingly powerful, it was high time. And that is also why I have induced our little circle of friends in the town to bind themselves more definitely together. It was high time, I can tell you!

Rebecca (*with a slight smile*). As a matter of fact, isn't it really rather late now?

Kroll. There is no denying it would have been more fortunate if we had succeeded in checking the stream at an earlier point. But who could really foresee what was coming? I am sure I could not. (*Gets up and walks up and down.*) Anyway, my eyes are completely opened now; for the spirit of revolt has spread even into my school.

Rosmer. Into the school? Surely not into your school?

Kroll. Indeed it has. Into my own school. What do you think of this? I have got wind of the fact that the boys in the top class—or rather, a part of the boys in it—have formed themselves into a secret society and have been taking in Mortensgaard's paper!

Rebecca. Ah, the "Searchlight."

Kroll. Yes, don't you think that is a nice sort of intellectual pabulum for future public servants? But the saddest part of it is that it is all the most promising boys in the class that have conspired together and hatched this plot against me. It is only the duffers and dunces that have held aloof from it.

Rebecca. Do you take it so much to heart, Mr. Kroll?

Kroll. Do I take it to heart, to find myself so hampered and thwarted in my life's work? (*Speaking more gently.*) I might find it in my heart to say that I could even take that for what it is worth; but I have not told you the worst of it yet. (*Looks round the room.*) I suppose nobody is likely to be listening at the doors?

Rebecca. Oh, certainly not.

Kroll. Then let me tell you that the revolt and dissension has spread into my own home—into my own peaceful home—and has disturbed the peace of my family life.

Rosmer (*getting up*). Do you mean it? In your own home?

Rebecca (*going up to Kroll*). Dear Mr. Kroll, what has happened?

Kroll. Would you believe it that my own children—. To make a long story short, my boy Laurits is the moving spirit of the conspiracy at the school. And Hilda has embroidered a red portfolio to keep the numbers of the "Searchlight" in.

Rosmer. I should never have dreamed of such a thing; in your family—in your own house—

Kroll. No, who would ever have dreamed of such a thing? In my house, where obedience and order have

always ruled—where hitherto there has never been anything but one unanimous will—

Rebecca. How does your wife take it?

Kroll. Ah, that is the most incredible part of the whole thing. She, who all her days—in great things and small—has concurred in my opinions and approved of all my views, has actually not refrained from throwing her weight on the children's side on many points. And now she considers I am to blame for what has happened. She says I try to coerce the young people too much. Just as if it were not necessary to—. Well, those are the sort of dissensions I have going on at home. But naturally I talk as little about it as possible; it is better to be silent about such things. (*Walks across the floor.*) Oh, yes.—Oh, yes. (*Stands by the window, with his hands behind his back, and looks out.*)

Rebecca (*goes up to* ROSMER, *and speaks in low, hurried tones, unheard by* KROLL). Do it!

Rosmer (*in the same tone*). Not to-night.

Rebecca (*as before*). Yes, this night of all others. (*Goes away from him and adjusts the lamp.*)

Kroll (*coming back*). Yes, my dear John, so now you know the sort of spirit of the age that has cast its shadow both over my home life and my official work. Ought I not to oppose this appalling, destructive, disorganising tendency with all the weapons I can lay my hands upon? Of course it is certainly my duty—and that both with my pen and my tongue.

Rosmer. But have you any hope that you can produce any effect in that way?

Kroll. At all events I mean to take my share in the fight as a citizen. And I consider that it is the duty of every patriotic man, every man who is concerned about what is right, to do the same. And, I may as well tell you, that is really the reason why I have come here to see you to-night.

Rosmer. My dear fellow, what do you mean? What can I—?

Kroll. You are going to help your old friends, and do as we are doing—take your share in it to the best of your ability.

Rebecca. But, Mr. Kroll, you know how little taste Mr. Rosmer has for that sort of thing.

Kroll. Then he has got to overcome that distaste now. You do not keep abreast of the times, John. You sit here and bury yourself in your historical researches. Goodness knows, I have the greatest respect for family pedigrees and all that they imply. But this is not the time for such occupations, unhappily. You have no conception of the state of affairs that is going on all over the country. Every single idea is turned upside down, or very nearly so. It will be a hard fight to get all the errors straightened out again.

Rosmer. I can quite believe it. But that sort of a fight is not in my line at all.

Rebecca. Besides, I rather fancy that Mr. Rosmer has come to look at the affairs of life with wider opened eyes than before.

Kroll (*with a start*). Wider opened eyes?

Rebecca. Yes, or with an opener mind—with less prejudice.

Kroll. What do you mean by that? John—surely you could never be so weak as to allow yourself to be deluded by the accidental circumstance that the demagogues have scored a temporary success!

Rosmer. My dear fellow, you know very well that I am no judge of politics; but it certainly seems to me that of late years individual thought has become somewhat more independent.

Kroll. Quite so—but do you consider that as a matter of course to be a good thing? In any case you are vastly mistaken, my friend. Just inquire a little into the opinions that are current amongst the Radicals, both out here in the country and in town. You will find them to be nothing else than the words of wisdom that appear in the "Searchlight."

Rebecca. Yes, Mortensgaard has a great deal of influence over the people about here.

Kroll. Yes, just think of it—a man with as dirty a record as his! A fellow that was turned out of his place as a schoolmaster because of his immoral conduct! This is the sort of man that poses as a leader of the people! And successfully, too!—actually suc-

cessfully! I hear that he means to enlarge his paper now. I know, on reliable authority, that he is looking for a competent assistant.

Rebecca. It seems to me surprising that you and your friends do not start an opposition paper.

Kroll. That is exactly what we intend to do. This very day we have bought the "County News." There was no difficulty about the financial side of the matter; but—. (*Turns towards* ROSMER.) Now we have come to the real purport of my visit. It is the management of it—the editorial management—that is the difficulty, you see. Look here, Rosmer—don't you feel called upon to undertake it, for the sake of the good cause?

Rosmer (*in a tone of consternation*). I!

Rebecca. How can you think of such a thing!

Kroll. I can quite understand your having a horror of public meetings and being unwilling to expose yourself to the mercies of the rabble that frequents them. But an editor's work, which is carried on in much greater privacy, or rather—

Rosmer. No, no, my dear fellow, you must not ask that of me.

Kroll. It would give me the greatest pleasure to have a try at work of that sort myself—only it would be quite out of the question for me; I am already saddled with such an endless number of duties. You, on the other hand, who are no longer hampered by any official duties, might—. Of course the rest of us would give you all the help in our power.

Rosmer. I cannot do it, Kroll. I am not fitted for it.

Kroll. Not fitted for it? That was just what you said when your father got you your living.

Rosmer. I was quite right; and that was why I resigned it, too.

Kroll. Well, if you only make as good an editor as you did a parson, we shall be quite satisfied.

Rosmer. My dear Kroll—once for all—I cannot do it.

Kroll. Well, then, I suppose you will give us the use of your name, at all events?

Rosmer. My name?

Kroll. Yes, the mere fact of John Rosmer's name being connected with it will be a great advantage to

the paper. We others are looked upon as pronounced partisans. I myself even have the reputation of being a wicked fanatic, I am told. Therefore we cannot count upon our own names to give us any particular help in making the paper known to the misguided masses. But you, on the contrary, have always held aloof from this kind of fighting. Your gentle and upright disposition, your polished mind, your unimpeachable honour, are known to and appreciated by every one about here. And then there is the deference and respect that your former position as a clergyman ensures for you—and, besides that, there is the veneration in which your family name is held!

Rosmer. Oh, my family name—

Kroll (*pointing to the portraits*). Rosmers of Rosmersholm—clergymen, soldiers, men who have filled high places in the state—men of scrupulous honour, every one of them—a family that has been rooted here, the most influential in the place, for nearly two centuries. (*Lays his hand on* ROSMER'S *shoulder.*) John, you owe it to yourself and to the traditions of your race to join us in defence of all that has hitherto been held sacred in our community. (*Turning to* REBECCA.) What do you say, Miss West?

Rebecca (*with a quiet little laugh*). My dear Mr. Kroll—is all sounds so absurdly ludicrous to me.

Kroll. What! Ludicrous?

Rebecca. Yes, because it is time you were told plainly—

Rosmer (*hurriedly*). No, no—don't! Not now!

Kroll (*looking from one to the other*). But, my dear friends, what on earth—? (*Breaks off, as* MRS. HELSETH *comes in by the door on the right.*) Ahem!

Mrs. Helseth. There is a man at the kitchen door, sir. He says he wants to see you.

Rosmer (*in a relieved voice*). Is there? Well, ask him to come in.

Mrs. Helseth. Shall I show him in here, sir?

Rosmer. Certainly.

Mrs. Helseth. But he doesn't look the sort of man one ought to allow in here.

Rebecca. What does he look like, Mrs. Helseth?

Mrs. Helseth. Oh, he is not much to look at, Miss.

Rosmer. Did he not give you his name?

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, I think he said it was Hekman, or something like that.

Rosmer. I do not know any one of that name.

Mrs. Helseth. And he said his Christian name was Ulrik.

Rosmer (*with a start of surprise*). Ulrik Hetman! Was that it?

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, sir, it was Hetman.

Kroll. I am certain I have heard that name before—

Rebecca. Surely it was the name that strange creature used to write under—

Rosmer (*to Kroll*). It is Ulrik Brendel's pseudonym, you know.

Kroll. That scamp Ulrik Brendel. You are quite right.

Rebecca. So he is alive still.

Rosmer. I thought he was travelling with a theatrical company.

Kroll. The last I heard of him was that he was in the workhouse.

Rosmer. Ask him to come in, Mrs. Helseth.

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, sir. (*Goes out.*)

Kroll. Do you really mean to allow this fellow into your house?

Rosmer. Oh, well, you know he was my tutor once.

Kroll. I know that what he did was to stuff your head with revolutionary ideas, and that in consequence your father turned him out of the house with a horse-whip.

Rosmer (*a little bitterly*). Yes, my father was always the commanding officer—even at home.

Kroll. Be grateful to his memory for that, my dear John. Ah! (MRS. HELSETH *shows* ULRIK BRENDEL *in at the door, then goes out and shuts the door after her.* BRENDEL *is a good-looking man with grey hair and beard; somewhat emaciated, but active and alert; he is dressed like a common tramp, in a threadbare frock coat, shoes with holes in them, and no visible linen at his neck or wrists. He wears a pair of old black gloves, carries a dirty soft hat under his arm, and has*

a walking-stick in his hand. He looks puzzled at first, then goes quickly up to KROLL *and holds out his hand to him.*)

Brendel. Good-evening, John!

Kroll. Excuse me—

Brendel. Did you ever expect to see me again? And inside these hated walls, too?

Kroll. Excuse me. (*Points to* ROSMER.) Over there.

Brendel (*turning round*). Quite right. There he is. John—my boy—my favourite pupil!—

Rosmer (*shaking hands with him*). My old tutor!

Brendel. In spite of certain recollections, I could not pass by Rosmersholm without paying you a flying visit.

Rosmer. You are very welcome here now. Be sure of that.

Brendel. And this charming lady—? (*Bows to Rebecca.*) Your wife, of course.

Rosmer. Miss West.

Brendel. A near relation, I presume. And our stranger friend here—? A colleague, I can see.

Rosmer. Mr. Kroll, master of the grammar school here.

Brendel. Kroll? Kroll? Wait a moment. Did you take the Philology course in your student days?

Kroll. Certainly I did.

Brendel. By Jove, I used to know you, then!

Kroll. Excuse me—

Brendel. Were you not—

Kroll. Excuse me—

Brendel. —one of those champions of all the virtues that got me turned out of the Debating Society?

Kroll. Very possibly. But I disclaim any other acquaintance with you.

Brendel. All right, all right! *Nach Belieben,* Mr. Kroll. I dare say I shall get over it. Ulrik Brendel will still be himself in spite of it.

Rebecca. Are you on your way to the town, Mr. Brendel?

Brendel. You have hit the nail on the head, ma'am. At certain intervals I am obliged to do something for

my living. I do not do it willingly—but, *enfin*—when needs must—

Rosmer. My dear Mr. Brendel, will you not let me be of assistance to you? In some way or another, I mean—

Brendel. Ah, what a proposal to come from you! Could you wish to soil the tie that binds us together? Never, John—never!

Rosmer. But what do you propose to do in the town, then? I assure you, you won't find it so easy—

Brendel. Leave that to me, my boy. The die is cast. The unworthy individual who stands before you is started on an extensive campaign—more extensive than all his former excursions put together. (*To* KROLL.) May I venture to ask you, Professor—*unter uns*—are there in your esteemed town any fairly decent, respectable and spacious assembly-rooms?

Kroll. The most spacious is the hall belonging to the Working Men's Association.

Brendel. May I ask, sir, if you have any special influence with that no doubt most useful Association?

Kroll. I have nothing whatever to do with it.

Rebecca (*to* BRENDEL). You ought to apply to Peter Mortensgaard.

Brendel. Pardon, madame—what sort of an idiot is he?

Rosmer. Why do you make up your mind he is an idiot?

Brendel. Do you suppose I can't tell, from the sound of the name, that it belongs to a plebeian?

Kroll. I did not expect that answer.

Brendel. But I will conquer my prejudices. There is nothing else for it. When a man stands at a turning-point in his life—as I do—. That is settled. I shall put myself into communication with this person—commence direct negotiations—

Rosmer. Are you in earnest when you say you are standing at a turning-point in your life?

Brendel. Does my own boy not know that wherever Ulrik Brendel stands he is always in earnest about it? Look here, I mean to become a new man now—to emerge from the cloak of reserve in which I have hitherto shrouded myself.

Rosmer. In what way?

Brendel. I mean to take an active part in life—to step forward—to look higher. The atmosphere we breathe is heavy with storms. I want now to offer my mite upon the altar of emancipation.

Kroll. You too?

Brendel (*to them all*). Has your public here any intimate acquaintance with my scattered writings?

Kroll. No, I must candidly confess that—

Rebecca. I have read several of them. My foster-father had them.

Brendel. My dear lady, then you have wasted your time. They are simply trash, allow me to tell you.

Rebecca. Really?

Brendel. Those you have read, yes. My really important works no man or woman knows anything about. No one—except myself.

Rebecca. How is that?

Brendel. Because they are not yet written.

Rosmer. But, my dear Mr. Brendel—

Brendel. You know, my dear John, that I am a bit of a sybarite—a *gourmet.* I have always been so. I have a taste for solitary enjoyment, because in that way my enjoyment is twice—ten times—as keen. It is like this. When I have been wrapped in a haze of golden dreams that have descended on me—when new, intoxicating, momentous thoughts have had their birth in my mind, and I have been fanned by the beat of their wings as they bore me aloft—at such moments I have transformed them into poetry, into visions, into pictures. In general outlines, that is to say.

Rosmer. Quite so.

Brendel. You cannot imagine the luxury of enjoyment I have experienced! The mysterious rapture of creation!—in general outlines, as I said. Applause, gratitude, eulogies, crowns of laurel!—all these I have culled with full hands trembling with joy. In my secret ecstasies I have steeped myself in a happiness so intoxicating—

Kroll. Ahem!

Rosmer. But you have never written anything of it down?

Brendel. Not a word. The thought of the dull clerk's work that it would mean has always moved me to a nauseating sense of disgust. Besides, why should I profane my own ideals when I could enjoy them, in all their purity, by myself? But now they shall be sacrificed. Honestly, I feel as a mother must do when she entrusts her young daughter to the arms of a husband. But I am going to sacrifice them nevertheless—sacrifice them on the altar of emancipation. A series of carefully thought-out lectures, to be delivered all over the country—!

Rebecca (*impetuously*). That is splendid of you, Mr. Brendel! You are giving up the most precious thing you possess.

Rosmer. The only thing.

Rebecca (*looking meaningly at* ROSMER). I wonder how many there are who would do as much—who dare do it?

Rosmer (*returning her look*). Who knows?

Brendel. My audience is moved. That refreshes my heart and strengthens my will—and now I shall proceed upon my task forthwith. There is one other point, though. (*To* KROLL.) Can you inform me, sir, whether there is an Abstainers' Society in the town? A Total Abstainers' Society? I feel sure there must be.

Kroll. There is one, at your service. I am the president.

Brendel. I could tell that as soon as I saw you! Well, it is not at all impossible that I may come to you and become a member for a week.

Kroll. Excuse me—we do not accept weekly members.

Brendel. A la bonne heure, my good sir. Ulrik Brendel has never been in the habit of forcing himself upon societies of that kind. (*Turns to go.*) But I must not prolong my stay in this house, rich as it is in memories. I must go into the town and find some suitable lodging. I shall find a decent hotel of some kind there, I hope?

Rebecca. Will you not have something hot to drink before you go?

Brendel. Of what nature, dear lady?

Rebecca. A cup of tea, or—

Brendel. A thousand thanks to the most generous of hostesses!—but I do not like trespassing on private hospitality. (*Waves his hand.*) Good-bye to you all! (*Goes to the door, but turns back.*) Oh, by the way—John—Mr. Rosmer—will you do your former tutor a service for old friendship's sake?

Rosmer. With the greatest of pleasure.

Brendel. Good. Well, then, lend me—just for a day or two—a starched shirt.

Rosmer. Nothing more than that!

Brendel. Because, you see, I am travelling on foot—on this occasion. My trunk is being sent after me.

Rosmer. Quite so. But, in that case, isn't there anything else?

Brendel. Well, I will tell you what—perhaps you have an old, worn-out summer coat that you could spare?

Rosmer. Certainly I have.

Brendel. And if there happened to be a pair of presentable shoes that would go with the coat—

Rosmer. I am sure we can manage that, too. As soon as you let us know your address, we will send the things to you.

Brendel. Please don't think of it! No one must be put to any inconvenience on my account! I will take the trifles with me.

Rosmer. Very well. Will you come upstairs with me, then?

Rebecca. Let me go. Mrs. Helseth and I will see about it.

Brendel. I could never think of allowing this charming lady—

Rebecca. Nonsense! Come along, Mr. Brendel. (*She goes out by the door on the right.*)

Rosmer (*holding* BRENDEL *back*). Tell me—is there no other way I can be of service to you?

Brendel. I am sure I do not know of any. Yes, perdition seize it!—now that I come to think of it—John, do you happen to have seven or eight shillings on you?

Rosmer. I will see. (*Opens his purse.*) I have two half-sovereigns here.

Brendel. Oh, well, never mind. I may as well take them. I can always get change in town. Thanks, in the meantime. Remember that it was two half sovereigns I had. Good-night, my own dear boy!—Good-night to you, sir! (*Goes out by the door on the right, where* ROSMER *takes leave of him and shuts the door after him.*)

Kroll. Good heavens—and that is the Ulrik Brendel of whom people once thought that he would do great things!

Rosmer. At all events he has had the courage to live his life in his own way. I do not think that is such a small thing, after all.

Kroll. What? A life like his? I almost believe he would have the power, even now, to disturb all your ideas.

Rosmer. No, indeed. I have come to a clear understanding with myself now, upon all points.

Kroll. I wish I could believe it, my dear Rosmer. You are so dreadfully susceptible to impressions from without.

Rosmer. Let us sit down. I want to have a talk with you.

Kroll. By all means. (*They sit down on the couch.*)

Rosmer (*after a short pause*). Don't you think everything here looks very pleasant and comfortable?

Kroll. Yes, it looks very pleasant and comfortable now—and peaceful. You have made yourself a real home, Rosmer. And I have lost mine.

Rosmer. My dear fellow, do not say that. There may seem to be a rift just now, but it will heal again.

Kroll. Never, never. The sting will always remain. Things can never be as they were before.

Rosmer. I want to ask you something, Kroll. You and I have been the closest of friends now for so many years—does it seem to you conceivable that anything could destroy our friendship?

Kroll. I cannot imagine anything that could cause a breach between us. What has put that into your head?

Rosmer. Well—your attaching such tremendous importance to similarity of opinions and views.

Kroll. Certainly I do; but then we two hold pretty

similar opinions—at all events on the most essential points.

Rosmer (*gently*). No. Not any longer.

Kroll (*trying to jump up from his seat*). What is this?

Rosmer (*restraining him*). No, you must sit still. Please, Kroll.

Kroll. What does it all mean? I do not understand you. Tell me, straight out!

Rosmer. A new summer has blossomed in my heart—my eyes have regained the clearness of youth. And, accordingly, I am now standing where—

Kroll. Where? Where are you standing?

Rosmer. Where your children are standing.

Kroll. You? You! The thing is impossible! Where do you say you are standing?

Rosmer. On the same side as Laurits and Hilda.

Kroll (*letting his head drop*). An apostate. John Rosmer an apostate.

Rosmer. What you are calling apostasy ought to have made me feel sincerely happy and fortunate; but for all that I have suffered keenly, because I knew quite well it would cause you bitter sorrow.

Kroll. Rosmer, Rosmer, I shall never get over this. (*Looks at him sadly.*) To think that you, too, could bring yourself to sympathise with and join in the work of disorder and ruin that is playing havoc with our unhappy country.

Rosmer. It is the work of emancipation that I sympathise with.

Kroll. Oh yes, I know all about that. That is what it is called by both those who are leading the people astray and by their misguided victims. But, be sure of this—you need expect no emancipation to be the result of the spirit that relies on the poisoning of the whole of our social life.

Rosmer. I do not give my allegiance to the spirit that is directing this, nor to any of those who are leading the fight. I want to try to bring men of all shades of opinion together—as many as I can reach—and bind them as closely together as I can. I want to live for and devote all the strength that is in me to one

end only—to create a real public opinion in the country.

Kroll. So you do not consider that we have sufficient public opinion! I, for my part, consider that the whole lot of us are on the high road to be dragged down into the mire where otherwise only the common people would be wallowing.

Rosmer. It is just for that reason that I have made up my mind as to what should be the real task of public opinion.

Kroll. What task?

Rosmer. The task of making all our fellow-countrymen into men of nobility.

Kroll. All our fellow-countrymen—!

Rosmer. As many as possible, at all events.

Kroll. By what means?

Rosmer. By emancipating their ideas and purifying their aspirations, it seems to me.

Kroll. You are a dreamer, Rosmer. Are *you* going to emancipate them? Are *you* going to purify them?

Rosmer. No, my dear fellow—I can only try to awaken the desire for it in them. The doing of it rests with themselves.

Kroll. And do you think they are capable of it?

Rosmer. Yes.

Kroll. Of their own power?

Rosmer. Yes, of their own power. There is no other that can do it.

Kroll (*getting up*). Is that speaking as befits a clergyman?

Rosmer. I am a clergyman no longer.

Kroll. Yes, but—what of the faith you were brought up in?

Rosmer. I have it no longer.

Kroll. You have it no longer?

Rosmer (*getting up*). I have given it up. I *had* to give it up, Kroll.

Kroll (*controlling his emotion*). I see. Yes, yes The one thing implies the other. Was that the reason, then, why you left the service of the Church?

Rosmer. Yes. When my mind was clearly made up—when I felt the certainty that it was not merely a

transitory temptation, but that it was something that I would neither have the power nor the desire to dismiss from my mind—then I took that step.

Kroll. So it has been fermenting in your mind as long as that. And we—your friends—have never been allowed to know anything of it. Rosmer, Rosmer—how could you hide the sorrowful truth from us!

Rosmer. Because I considered it was a matter that only concerned myself; and therefore I did not wish to cause you and my other friends any unnecessary pain. I thought I should be able to live my life here as I have done hitherto—peacefully and happily. I wanted to read, and absorb myself in all the works that so far had been sealed books to me—to familiarise myself thoroughly with the great world of truth and freedom that has been disclosed to me now.

Kroll. An apostate. Every word you say bears witness to that. But, for all that, why have you made this confession of your secret apostasy? Or why just at the present moment?

Rosmer. You yourself have compelled me to it, Kroll.

Kroll. I? I have compelled you?

Rosmer. When I heard of your violent behaviour at public meetings—when I read the reports of all the vehement speeches you made there—of all your bitter attacks upon those that were on the other side—your scornful censure of your opponents—oh, Kroll, to think that you—*you*—could be the man to do that!—then my eyes were opened to my imperative duty. Mankind is suffering from the strife that is going on now, and we ought to bring peace and happiness and a spirit of reconciliation into their souls. That is why I step forward now and confess myself openly for what I am—and, besides, I want to put my powers to the test, as well as others. Could not you—from your side—go with me in that, Kroll?

Kroll. Never, as long as I live, will I make any alliance with the forces of disorder in the community.

Rosmer. Well, let us at least fight with honourable weapons, since it seems we must fight.

Kroll. I can have nothing more to do with any one

who does not think with me on matters of vital importance, and I owe such a man no consideration.

Rosmer. Does that apply even to me?

Kroll. You yourself have broken with me, Rosmer.

Rosmer. But does this really mean a breach between us?

Kroll. Between us! It is a breach with all those who have hitherto stood shoulder to shoulder with you. And now you must take the consequences.

(REBECCA *comes in from the room on the right and opens the door wide.*)

Rebecca. Well, that is done! We have started him off on the road to his great sacrifice, and now we can go in to supper. Will you come in, Mr. Kroll?

Kroll (*taking his hat*). Good-night, Miss West. This is no longer any place for me.

Rebecca (*excitedly*). What do you mean? (*Shuts the door and comes nearer to the two men.*) Have you told him—?

Rosmer. He knows now.

Kroll. We shall not let you slip out of our hands, Rosmer. We shall compel you to come back to us again.

Rosmer. I shall never find myself there any more.

Kroll. We shall see. You are not the man to endure standing alone.

Rosmer. I am not so entirely alone, even now. There are two of us to bear the solitude together here.

Kroll. Ah! (*A suspicion appears to cross his mind.*) That too! Beata's words!

Rosmer. Beata's—?

Kroll (*dismissing the thought from his mind*). No, no—that was odious of me. Forgive me.

Rosmer. What? What do you mean?

Kroll. Think no more about it. I am ashamed of it. Forgive me—and good-bye. (*Goes out by the door to the hall.*)

Rosmer (*following him*). Kroll! We cannot end everything between us like this. I will come and see you to-morrow.

Kroll (*turning round in the hall*). You shall not set your foot in my house. (*Takes his stick and goes.*

ROSMER *stands for a while at the open door; then shuts it and comes back into the room.*)

Rosmer. That does not matter, Rebecca. We shall be able to go through with it, for all that—we two trusty friends—you and I.

Rebecca. What do you suppose he meant just now when he said he was ashamed of himself?

Rosmer. My dear girl, don't bother your head about that. He didn't even believe what he meant, himself. But I will go and see him to-morrow. Good-night!

Rebecca. Are you going up so early to-night—after this?

Rosmer. As early to-night as I usually do. I feel such a sense of relief now that it is over. You see, my dear Rebecca, I am perfectly calm—so you take it calmly, too. Good-night.

Rebecca. Good-night, dear friend—and sleep well! (ROSMER *goes out by the door to the lobby; then his footsteps are heard as he goes upstairs.* REBECCA *goes to the wall and rings a bell, which is answered by* MRS. HELSETH.) You can clear the table again, Mrs. Helseth. Mr. Rosmer does not want anything, and Mr. Kroll has gone home.

Mrs. Helseth. Gone home? What was wrong with him, miss?

Rebecca (*taking up her crochet-work*). He prophesied that there was a heavy storm brewing—

Mrs. Helseth. That is very strange, miss, because there isn't a scrap of cloud in the sky.

Rebecca. Let us hope he doesn't meet the White Horse. Because I am afraid it will not be long before we hear something of the family ghost.

Mrs. Helseth. God forgive you, miss—don't talk of such a dreadful thing!

Rebecca. Oh, come, come!

Mrs. Helseth (*lowering her voice*). Do you really think, miss, that some one here is to go soon?

Rebecca. Not a bit of it. But there are so many sorts of white horses in this world, Mrs. Helseth.—Well, good-night. I shall go to my room now.

Mrs. Helseth. Good-night, miss. (*Rebecca takes her*

work and goes out to the right. MRS. HELSETH *shakes her head, as she turns down the lamp, and mutters to herself*): Lord—Lord!—how queer Miss West does talk sometimes!

ACT II

(SCENE.—ROSMER'S *study. The door into it is in the left-hand wall. At the back of the room is a doorway with a curtain drawn back from it, leading to his bedroom. On the right, a window, in front of which is a writing-table strewn with books and papers. Book-shelves and cupboards on the walls. Homely furniture. On the left, an old-fashioned sofa with a table in front of it.* ROSMER, *wearing a smoking-jacket, is sitting at the writing-table on a high-backed chair. He is cutting and turning over the leaves of a magazine, and dipping into it here and there. A knock is heard at the door on the left.*)

Rosmer (*without turning round*). Come in.

(REBECCA *comes in, wearing a morning wrapper.*)

Rebecca. Good morning.

Rosmer (*still turning over the leaves of his book*). Good morning, dear. Do you want anything?

Rebecca. Only to ask if you have slept well?

Rosmer. I went to sleep feeling so secure and happy. I did not even dream. (*Turns round.*) And you?

Rebecca. Thanks, I got to sleep in the early morning—

Rosmer. I do not think I have felt so light-hearted for a long time as I do to-day. I am so glad that I had the opportunity to say what I did.

Rebecca. Yes, you should not have been silent so long, John.

Rosmer. I cannot understand how I came to be such a coward.

Rebecca. I am sure it was not really from cowardice—

Rosmer. Yes, indeed. I can see that at bottom there was some cowardice about it.

Rebecca. So much the braver of you to face it as you did! (*Sits down beside him on a chair by the writing-table.*) But now I want to confess something that I have done—something that you must not be vexed with me about.

Rosmer. Vexed? My dear girl, how can you think—?

Rebecca. Yes, because I dare say it was a little presumptuous of me, but—

Rosmer. Well, let me hear what it was.

Rebecca. Last night, when that Ulrick Brendel was going, I wrote him a line or two to take to Mortensgaard.

Rosmer (*a little doubtfully*). But, my dear Rebecca—. What did you write, then?

Rebecca. I wrote that he would be doing you a service if he would interest himself a little in that unfortunate man, and help him in any way he could.

Rosmer. My dear, you should not have done that. You have only done Brendel harm by doing so. And, besides, Mortensgaard is a man I particularly wish to have nothing to do with. You know I have been at loggerheads once with him already.

Rebecca. But do you not think that now it might be a very good thing if you got on to good terms with him again?

Rosmer. I? With Mortensgaard? For what reason, do you mean?

Rebecca. Well, because you cannot feel altogether secure now—since this has come between you and your friends.

Rosmer (*looking at her and shaking his head*). Is it possible that you think either Kroll or any of the others would take a revenge on me—that they could be capable of—

Rebecca. In their first heat of indignation, dear. No one can be certain of that. I think, after the way Mr. Kroll took it—

Rosmer. Oh, you ought to know him better than that. Kroll is an honourable man, through and

through. I will go into town this afternoon and have a talk with him. I will have a talk with them all. Oh, you will see how smoothly everything will go. (MRS. HELSETH *comes in by the door on the left.*)

Rebecca (*getting up*). What is it, Mrs. Helseth?

Mrs. Helseth. Mr. Kroll is downstairs in the hall, miss.

Rosmer (*getting up quickly*). Kroll!

Rebecca. Mr. Kroll! What a surprise!

Mrs. Helseth. He asks if he may come up and speak to Mr. Rosmer.

Rosmer (*to* REBECCA). What did I say! (*To* MRS. HELSETH). Of course he may. (*Goes to the door and calls down the stairs.*) Come up, my dear fellow! I am delighted to see you! (*He stands holding the door open.* MRS. HELSETH *goes out.* REBECCA *draws the curtain over the doorway at the back, and then begins to tidy the room.* KROLL *comes in, with his hat in his hand.*)

Rosmer (*quietly, and with some emotion*). I knew quite well it would not be the last time—

Kroll. To-day I see the matter in quite a different light from yesterday.

Rosmer. Of course you do, Kroll! Of course you do! You have been thinking things over—

Kroll. You misunderstand me altogether. (*Puts his hat down on the table.*) It is important that I should speak to you alone.

Rosmer. Why may not Miss West—?

Rebecca. No, no, Mr. Rosmer. I will go.

Kroll (*looking meaningly at her*). And I see I ought to apologise to you, Miss West, for coming here so early in the morning. I see I have taken you by surprise, before you have had time to—

Rebecca (*with a start*). Why so? Do you find anything out of place in the fact of my wearing a morning wrapper at home here?

Kroll. By no means! Besides, I have no knowledge of what customs may have grown up at Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. Kroll, you are not the least like yourself to-day.

Rebecca. I will wish you good morning, Mr. Kroll. (*Goes out to the left.*)

Kroll. If you will allow me— (*Sits down on the couch.*)

Rosmer. Yes, my dear fellow, let us make ourselves comfortable and have a confidential talk. (*Sits down on a chair facing* KROLL.)

Kroll. I have not been able to close an eye since yesterday. I lay all night, thinking and thinking.

Rosmer. And what have you got to say to-day?

Kroll. It will take me some time, Rosmer. Let me begin with a sort of introduction. I can give you some news of Ulrick Brendel.

Rosmer. Has he been to see you?

Kroll. No. He took up his quarters in a low-class tavern—in the lowest kind of company, of course; drank, and stood drinks to others, as long as he had any money left; and then began to abuse the whole lot of them as a contemptible rabble—and, indeed, as far as that goes he was quite right. But the result was that he got a thrashing and was thrown out into the gutter.

Rosmer. I see he is altogether incorrigible.

Kroll. He had pawned the coat you gave him, too, but that is going to be redeemed for him. Can you guess by whom?

Rosmer. By yourself, perhaps?

Kroll. No. By our noble friend Mr. Mortensgaard.

Rosmer. Is that so?

Kroll. I am informed that Mr. Brendel's first visit was paid to the "idiot" and "plebeian."

Rosmer. Well, it was very lucky for him—

Kroll. Indeed it was. (*Leans over the table, towards* ROSMER.) Now I am coming to a matter of which, for the sake of our old—our former—friendship, it is my duty to warn you.

Rosmer. My dear fellow, what is that?

Kroll. It is this, that certain games are going on behind your back in this house.

Rosmer. How can you think that? Is it Rebec—is it Miss West you are alluding to?

Kroll. Precisely. And I can quite understand it on

her part; she has been accustomed, for such a long time now, to do as she likes here. But nevertheless—

Rosmer. My dear Kroll, you are absolutely mistaken. She and I have no secrets from one another about anything whatever.

Kroll. Then has she confessed to you that she has been corresponding with the editor of the "Searchlight"?

Rosmer. Oh, you mean the couple of lines she wrote to him on Ulrik Brendel's behalf?

Kroll. You have found that out, then? And do you approve of her being on terms of this sort with that scurrilous hack, who almost every week tries to pillory me for my attitude in my school and out of it?

Rosmer. My dear fellow, I don't suppose that side of the question has ever occurred to her. And, in any case, of course she has entire freedom of action, just as I have myself.

Kroll. Indeed? Well, I suppose that is quite in accordance with the new turn your views have taken—because I suppose Miss West looks at things from the same standpoint as you?

Rosmer. She does. We two have worked our way forward in complete companionship.

Kroll (*looking at him and shaking his head slowly*). Oh, you blind, deluded man!

Rosmer. I? What makes you say that?

Kroll. Because I dare not—I *will* not—think the worst. No, no, let me finish what I want to say. Am I to believe that you really prize my friendship, Rosmer? And my respect, too? Do you?

Rosmer. Surely I need not answer that question.

Kroll. Well, but there are other things that require answering—that require full explanation on your part. Will you submit to it if I hold a sort of inquiry—?

Rosmer. An inquiry?

Kroll. Yes, if I ask you questions about one or two things that it may be painful for you to recall to mind. For instance, the matter of your apostasy—well, your emancipation, if you choose to call it so—is bound up with so much else for which, for your own sake, you ought to account to me.

Rosmer. My dear fellow, ask me about anything you please. I have nothing to conceal.

Kroll. Well, then, tell me this—what do you yourself believe was the real reason of Beata's making away with herself?

Rosmer. Can you have any doubt? Or perhaps I should rather say, need one look for reasons for what an unhappy sick woman, who is unaccountable for her actions, may do?

Kroll. Are you certain that Beata was so entirely unaccountable for her actions? The doctors, at all events, did not consider that so absolutely certain.

Rosmer. If the doctors had ever seen her in the state in which I have so often seen her, both night and day, they would have had no doubt about it.

Kroll. I did not doubt it either, at the time.

Rosmer. Of course not. It was impossible to doubt it, unfortunately. You remember what I told you of her ungovernable, wild fits of passion—which she expected me to reciprocate. She terrified me! And think how she tortured herself with baseless self-reproaches in the last years of her life!

Kroll. Yes, when she knew that she would always be childless.

Rosmer. Well, think what it meant—to be perpetually in the clutches of such agony of mind over a thing that she was not in the slightest degree responsible for—! Are you going to suggest that she was accountable for her actions?

Kroll. Hm!—Do you remember whether at that time you had in the house any books dealing with the purport of marriage—according to the advanced views of to-day?

Rosmer. I remember Miss West's lending me a work of the kind. She inherited Dr. West's library, you know. But, my dear Kroll, you surely do not suppose that we were so imprudent as to let the poor sick creature get wind of any such ideas? I can solemnly swear that we were in no way to blame. It was the overwrought nerves of her own brain that were responsible for these frantic aberrations.

Kroll. There is one thing, at any rate, that I can tell you now, and that is that your poor tortured and overwrought Beata put an end to her own life in order that yours might be happy—and that you might be free to live as you pleased.

Rosmer (*starting half up from his chair*). What do you mean by that?

Kroll. You must listen to me quietly, Rosmer—because now I can speak of it. During the last year of her life she came twice to see me, to tell me what she suffered from her fears and her despair.

Rosmer. On that point?

Kroll. No. The first time she came she declared that you were on the high road to apostasy—that you were going to desert the faith that your father had taught you.

Rosmer (*eagerly*). What you say is impossible, Kroll!—absolutely impossible! You must be wrong about that.

Kroll. Why?

Rosmer. Because as long as Beata lived I was still doubting and fighting with myself. And I fought out that fight alone and in the completest secrecy. I do not imagine that even Rebecca—

Kroll. Rebecca?

Rosmer. Oh, well—Miss West. I call her Rebecca for the sake of convenience.

Kroll. So I have observed.

Rosmer. That is why it is so incomprehensible to me that Beata should have had any suspicion of it. Why did she never speak to me about it?—for she never did, by a single word.

Kroll. Poor soul—she begged and implored me to speak to you.

Rosmer. Then why did you never do so?

Kroll. Do you think I had a moment's doubt, at that time, that her mind was unhinged? Such an accusation as that, against a man like you! Well, she came to see me again, about a month later. She seemed calmer then; but, as she was going away, she said: "They may expect to see the White Horse soon at Rosmersholm."

Rosmer. Yes, I know—the White Horse. She often used to talk about that.

Kroll. And then, when I tried to distract her from such unhappy thoughts, she only answered: "I have not much time left; for John must marry Rebecca immediately now."

Rosmer (*almost speechless*). What are you saying! I marry—!

Kroll. That was on a Thursday afternoon. On the Saturday evening she threw herself from the footbridge into the mill-race.

Rosmer. And you never warned us!

Kroll. Well, you know yourself how constantly she used to say that she was sure she would die before long.

Rosmer. Yes, I know. But, all the same, you ought to have warned us!

Kroll. I did think of doing so. But then it was too late.

Rosmer. But since then, why have you not—? Why have you kept all this to yourself?

Kroll. What good would it have done for me to come here and add to your pain and distress? Of course I thought the whole thing was merely wild, empty fancy—until yesterday evening.

Rosmer. Then you do not think so any longer?

Kroll. Did not Beata see clearly enough, when she saw that you were going to fall away from your childhood's faith?

Rosmer (*staring in front of him*). Yes, I cannot understand that. It is the most incomprehensible thing in the world to me.

Kroll. Incomprehensible or not, the thing is true. And now I ask you, Rosmer, how much truth is there in her other accusation?—the last one, I mean.

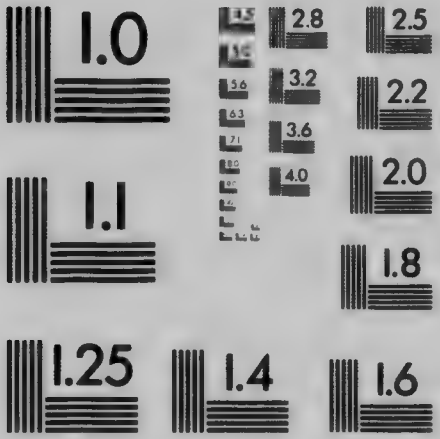
Rosmer. Accusation? Was that an accusation, then?

Kroll. Perhaps you did not notice how it was worded. She said she meant to stand out of the way—. Why? Well?

Rosmer. In order that I might marry Rebecca, apparently.

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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Kroll. That was not quite how it was worded. Beata expressed herself differently. She said: "I have not much time left; for John must marry Rebecca *immediately* now."

Rosmer (*looks at him for a moment; then gets up*). Now I understand you, Kroll.

Kroll. And if you do? What answer have you to make?

Rosmer (*in an even voice, controlling himself*). To such an unheard-of—? The only fitting answer would be to point to the door.

Kroll (*getting up*). Very good.

Rosmer (*standing face to face with him*). Listen to me. For considerably more than a year—to be precise, since Beata's death—Rebecca West and I have lived here alone at Rosmersholm. All that time you have known of the charge Beata made against us; but I have never for one moment seen you appear the least scandalised at our living together here.

Kroll. I never knew, till yesterday evening, that it was a case of an apostate man and an "emancipated" woman living together.

Rosmer. Ah!—So then you do not believe in any purity of life among apostates or emancipated folk? You do not believe that they may have the instinct of morality ingrained in their natures?

Kroll. I have no particular confidence in the kind of morality that is not rooted in the Church's faith.

Rosmer. And you mean that to apply to Rebecca and myself?—to my relations with Rebecca?

Kroll. I cannot make any departure, in favour of you two, from my opinion that there is certainly no very wide gulf between free thinking and—ahem!

Rosmer. And what?

Kroll. And free love, since you force me to say it.

Rosmer (*gently*). And you are not ashamed to say that to me!—you, who have known me ever since I was a boy.

Kroll. It is just for that reason. I know how easily you allow yourself to be influenced by those you associate with. And as for your Rebecca—well, your Miss West, then—to tell the truth, we know very little about

her. To cut the matter short, Rosmer—I am not going to give you up. And you, on your part, ought to try and save yourself in time.

Rosmer. Save myself? How—? (MRS. HELSETH *looks in through the door on the left.*) What do you want?

Mrs. Helseth. I wanted to ask Miss West to come down, sir.

Rosmer. Miss West is not up here.

Mrs. Helseth. Indeed, sir? (*Looks round the room.*) That is very strange. (*Goes out.*)

Rosmer. You were saying—?

Kroll. Listen to me. As to what may have gone on here in secret while Beata was alive, and as to what may be still going on here, I have no wish to inquire more closely. You were, of course, extremely unhappy in your marriage—and to some extent that may be urged in your excuse—

Rosmer. Oh, how little you really know me!

Kroll. Do not interrupt me. What I want to say is this. If you definitely must continue living with Miss West, it is absolutely necessary that you should conceal the revolution of opinion—I mean the distressing apostasy—that she has beguiled you into. Let me speak! Let me speak! I say that, if you are determined to go on with this folly, for heaven's sake hold any variety of ideas or opinions or beliefs you like—but keep your opinions to yourself. It is a purely personal matter, and there is not the slightest necessity to go proclaiming it all over the countryside.

Rosmer. It is a necessity for me to abandon a false and equivocal position.

Kroll. But you have a duty towards the traditions of your family, Rosmer! Remember that! From time immemorial Rosmersholm has been a stronghold of discipline and order, of respect and esteem for all that the best people in our community have upheld and sanctioned. The whole neighbourhood has taken its tone from Rosmersholm. If the report gets about that you yourself have broken with what I may call the Rosmer family tradition, it will evoke an irreparable state of unrest.

Rosmer. My dear Kroll, I cannot see the matter in that light. It seems to me that it is my imperative duty to bring a little light and happiness into the place where the race of Rosmers has spread darkness and oppression for all these long years.

Kroll (*looking severely at him*). Yes, that would be a worthy action for the man with whom the race will disappear. Let such things alone, my friend. It is no suitable task for you. You were meant to lead the peaceful life of a student.

Rosmer. Yes, that may be so. But nevertheless I want to try and play my humble part in the struggles of life.

Kroll. The struggles of life! Do you know what that will mean for you? It will mean war to the death with all your friends.

Rosmer (*quietly*). I do not imagine they are all such fanatics as you.

Kroll. You are a simple-minded creature, Rosmer—an inexperienced creature. You have no suspicion of the violence of the storm that will burst upon you. (MRS. HELSETH *slightly opens the door on the left.*)

Mrs. Helseth. Miss West wishes me to ask you, sir—

Rosmer. What is it?

Mrs. Helseth. There is some one downstairs that wishes to speak to you for a minute, sir.

Rosmer. Is it the gentleman that was here yesterday afternoon, by any chance?

Mrs. Helseth. No, it is that Mr. Mortensgaard.

Rosmer. Mortensgaard?

Kroll. Aha! So matters have got as far as that already, have they!

Rosmer. What does he want with me? Why did you not send him away?

Mrs. Helseth. Miss West told me to ask you if he might come up.

Rosmer. Tell him I am engaged, and—

Kroll (*to* MRS. HELSETH). No; show him up, please. (MRS. HELSETH *goes out.* KROLL *takes up his hat.*) I quit the field—temporarily. But we have not fought the decisive action yet.

Rosmer. As truly as I stand here, Kroll, I have absolutely nothing to do with Mortensgaard.

Kroll. I do not believe you any longer—on any point. Under no circumstances shall I have any faith in you after this. It is war to the knife now. We shall try if we cannot make you powerless to do any harm.

Rosmer. Oh, Kroll—how you have sunk! How low you have sunk!

Kroll. I? And a man like you has the face to say so? Remember Beata!

Rosmer. Are you harking back to that again!

Kroll. No. You must solve the riddle of the mill-race as your conscience will allow you—if you have any conscience still left. (PETER MORTENSGAARD *comes in softly and quietly, by the door on the left. He is a short, slightly built man with sparse reddish hair and beard.* KROLL *gives him a look of hatred.*) The "Searchlight" too, I see. Lighted at Rosmersholm! (*Buttons up his coat.*) That leaves me no doubt as to the course I should steer.

Mortensgaard (*quietly*). The "Searchlight" will always be ready burning to light Mr. Kroll home.

Kroll. Yes, you have shown me your goodwill for a long time. To be sure there is a Commandment that forbids us to bear false witness against our neighbour—

Mortensgard. Mr. Kroll has no need to instruct me in the Commandments.

Kroll. Not even in the sixth?

Rosmer. Kroll—!

Mortensgaard. If I needed such instruction, Mr. Rosmer is the most suitable person to give it me.

Kroll (*with scarcely concealed scorn*). Mr. Rosmer? Oh yes, the Reverend Mr. Rosmer is undoubtedly the most suitable man for that! I hope you will enjoy yourselves, gentlemen. (*Goes out and slams the door after him.*)

Rosmer (*stands looking at the door, and says to himself*): Yes, yes—it had to be so. (*Turns round.*) Will you tell me, Mr. Mortensgaard, what has brought you out here to see me?

Mortensgaard. It was really Miss West I wanted to

see. I thought I ought to thank her for the kind letter I received from her yesterday.

Rosmer. I know she has written to you. Have you had a talk with her?

Mortensgaard. Yes, a little. (*Smiles slightly.*) I hear that there has been a change of views in certain respects at Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. My views have changed to a very considerable extent; I might almost say entirely.

Mortensgaard. That is what Miss West said. And that was why she thought I ought to come up and have a little chat with you about this.

Rosmer. About what, Mr. Mortensgaard?

Mortensgaard. May I have your permission to announce in the "Searchlight" that you have altered your opinions, and are going to devote yourself to the cause of free thought and progress?

Rosmer. By all means. I will go so far as to *ask* you to make the announcement.

Mortensgaard. Then it shall appear to-morrow. It will be a great and weighty piece of news that the Reverend Mr. Rosmer of Rosmersholm has made up his mind to join the forces of light in that direction too.

Rosmer. I do not quite understand you.

Mortensgaard. What I mean is that it implies the gain of strong moral support for our party every time we win over an earnest, Christian-minded adherent.

Rosmer (*with some astonishment*). Then you don't know—? Did Miss West not tell you that as well?

Mortensgaard. What, Mr. Rosmer? Miss West was in a considerable hurry. She told me to come up, and that I would hear the rest of it from yourself.

Rosmer. Very well, then; let me tell you that I have cut myself free entirely—on every side. I have now no connection of any kind with the tenets of the Church. For the future such matters have not the smallest signification for me.

Mortensgaard (*looking at him in perplexity*). Well, if the moon had fallen down from the sky, I could not be more—! To think that I should ever hear you yourself renounce—!

Rosmer. Yes, I stand now where you have stood for a long time. You can announce that in the "Searchlight" to-morrow too.

Mortensgaard. That, too? No, my dear Mr. Rosmer—you must excuse me—but it is not worth touching on that side of the matter.

Rosmer. Not touch on it?

Mortensgaard. Not at first, I think.

Rosmer. But I do not understand—

Mortensgaard. Well, it is like this, Mr. Rosmer. You are not as familiar with all the circumstances of the case as I am, I expect. But if you, too, have joined the forces of freedom—and if you, as Miss West says you do, mean to take part in the movement—I conclude you do so with the desire to be as useful to the movement as you possibly can, in practice as well as in theory.

Rosmer. Yes, that is my most sincere wish.

Mortensgaard. Very well. But I must impress on you, Mr. Rosmer, that if you come forward openly with this news about your defection from the Church, you will tie your own hands immediately.

Rosmer. Do you think so?

Mortensgaard. Yes, you may be certain that there is not much that you would be able to do hereabouts. And besides, Mr. Rosmer, we have quite enough free-thinkers already—indeed, I was going to say we have too many of those gentry. What the party needs is a Christian element—something that every one must respect. That is what we want badly. And for that reason it is most advisable that you should hold your tongue about any matters that do not concern the public. That is my opinion.

Rosmer. I see. Then you would not risk having anything to do with me if I were to confess my apostasy openly?

Mortensgaard (*shaking his head*). I should not like to, Mr. Rosmer. Lately I have made it a rule never to support anybody or anything that is opposed to the interests of the Church.

Rosmer. Have you, then, entered the fold of the Church again lately?

Mortensgaard. That is another matter altogether.

Rosmer. Oh, that is how it is. Yes, I understand you now.

Mortensgaard. Mr. Rosmer—you ought to remember that I, of all people, have not absolute freedom of action.

Rosmer. What hampers you?

Mortensgaard. What hampers me is that I am a marked man.

Rosmer. Ah—of course.

Mortensgaard. A marked man, Mr. Rosmer. And you, of all people, ought to remember that—because you were responsible, more than any one else, for my being branded.

Rosmer. If I had stood then where I stand now, I should have handled the affair more judiciously.

Mortensgaard. I think so too. But it is too late now; you have branded me, once for all—branded me for life. I do not suppose you can fully realise what such a thing means. But it is possible that you may soon feel the smart of it yourself now, Mr. Rosmer.

Rosmer. I?

Mortensgaard. Yes. You surely do not suppose that Mr. Kroll and his gang will be inclined to forgive a rupture such as yours? And the "County News" is going to be pretty bloodthirsty, I hear. It may very well come to pass that you will be a marked man, too.

Rosmer. On personal grounds, Mr. Mortensgaard, I feel myself to be invulnerable. My conduct does not offer any point of attack.

Mortensgaard (*with a quiet smile*). That is saying a good deal, Mr. Rosmer.

Rosmer. Perhaps it is. But I have the right to say as much.

Mortensgaard. Even if you were inclined to overhaul your conduct as thoroughly as you once overhauled mine?

Rosmer. You say that very strangely. What are you driving at?—is it anything definite?

Mortensgard. Yes, there is one definite thing—no more than a single one. But it might be quite awkward enough if malicious opponents got a hint of it.

Rosmer. Will you have the kindness to tell me what on earth it is?

Mortensgaard. Can you not guess, Mr. Rosmer?

Rosmer. No, not for a moment.

Mortensgaard. All right. I must come out with it, then. I have in my possession a remarkable letter, that was written here at Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. Miss West's letter, you mean? Is it so remarkable?

Mortensgaard. No, that letter is not remarkable. But I received a letter from this house on another occasion.

Rosmer. From Miss West?

Mortensgaard. No, Mr. Rosmer.

Rosmer. Well, from whom, then? From whom?

Mortensgaard. From your late wife.

Rosmer. From my wife? You had a letter from my wife?

Mortensgaard. Yes, I did.

Rosmer. When?

Mortensgaard. It was during the poor lady's last days. It must be about a year and a half ago now. And that is the letter that is so remarkable.

Rosmer. Surely you know that my wife's mind was affected at that time?

Mortensgaard. I know there were a great many [illegible] who thought so. But, in my opinion, no one could have imagined anything of the kind from the letter. When I say the letter is a remarkable one, I mean remarkable in quite another way.

Rosmer. And what in the world did my poor wife find to write to you about?

Mortensgaard. I have the letter at home. It begins more or less to the effect that she is living in perpetual terror and dread, because of the fact that there are so many evilly disposed people about her whose only desire is to do you harm and mischief.

Rosmer. Me?

Mortensgaard. Yes, so she says. And then follows the most remarkable part of it all. Shall I tell you, Mr. Rosmer?

Rosmer. Of course! Tell me everything, without any reserve.

Mortensgaard. The poor lady begs and entreats me to be magnanimous. She says that she knows it was you who got me dismissed from my post as schoolmaster, and implores me most earnestly not to revenge myself upon you.

Rosmer. What way did she think you could revenge yourself, then?

Mortensgaard. The letter goes on to say that if I should hear that anything sinful was going on at Rosmersholm, I was not to believe a word of it; that it would be only the work of wicked folk who were spreading the rumours on purpose to do you harm.

Rosmer. Does the letter say that?

Mortensgaard. You may read it at your convenience, Mr. Rosmer.

Rosmer. But I cannot understand—! What did she imagine there could be any wicked rumours about?

Mortensgaard. In the first place, that you had broken away from the faith of your childhood. Mrs. Rosmer denied that absolutely—at that time. And, in the next place—ahem!—

Rosmer. In the next place?

Mortensgaard. Well, in the next place she writes—though rather confusedly—that she has no knowledge of any sinful relations existing at Rosmersholm; that she has never been wronged in any way; and that if any rumours of that sort should get about, she entreats me not to allude to them in the "Searchlight."

Rosmer. Does she mention any names?

Mortensgaard. No.

Rosmer. Who brought you the letter?

Mortensgaard. I promised not to tell that. It was brought to me one evening after dark.

Rosmer. If you had made inquiries at the time, you would have learnt that my poor unhappy wife was not fully accountable for her actions.

Mortensgaard. I did make inquiries, Mr. Rosmer; but I must say I did not get exactly that impression.

Rosmer. Not?—But why have you chosen this moment to enlighten me as to the existence of this old crazy letter?

Mortensgaard. With the object of advising you to be extremely cautious, Mr. Rosmer.

Rosmer. As to my way of life, do you mean?

Mortensgaard. Yes. You must remember that for the future you will not be unassailable.

Rosmer. So you persist in thinking that I have something to conceal here?

Mortensgaard. I do not see any reason why a man of emancipated ideas should refrain from living his life as fully as possible. Only, as I have already said, you should be cautious in future. If rumours should get about of anything that offends people's prejudices, you may be quite certain that the whole cause of freedom of thought will suffer for it.—Good-bye, Mr. Rosmer.

Rosmer. Good-bye.

Mortensgaard. I shall go straight to the printing-office now and have the great piece of news inserted in the "Searchlight."

Rosmer. Put it all in.

Mortensgaard. I will put in as much as there is any need for the public to know. (*Bows, and goes out.* ROSMER *stands at the door, while* MORTENSGAARD *goes downstairs. The front door is heard shutting.*)

Rosmer (*still standing in the doorway, calls softly*). Rebecca! Reb—ahem! (*Calls loudly.*) Mrs. Helseth—is Miss West downstairs?

Mrs. Helseth (*from below*). No, sir, she is not here.

(*The curtain at the end of the room is drawn back, disclosing* REBECCA *standing in the doorway.*)

Rebecca. John!

Rosmer (*turning round*). What! Were you in there, in my bedroom! My dear, what were you doing there?

Rebecca (*going up to him*). I have been listening.

Rosmer. Rebecca! Could you do a thing like that?

Rebecca. Indeed I could. It was so horrid the way he said that—about my morning wrapper—

Rosmer. Ah, so you were in there too when Kroll—?

Rebecca. Yes. I wanted to know what was at the bottom of his mind.

Rosmer. You know I would have told you.

Rebecca. I scarcely think you would have told me everything—certainly not in his own words.

Rosmer. Did you hear everything, then?

Rebecca. Most of it, I think. I had to go down for a moment when Mortensgaard came.

Rosmer. And then came up again?

Rebecca. Do not take it ill of me, dear friend.

Rosmer. Do anything that you think right and proper. You have full freedom of action.—But what do you say to it all, Rebecca? Ah, I do not think I have ever stood so much in need of you as I do to-day.

Rebecca. Surely both you and I have been prepared for what would happen some day.

Rosmer. No, no—not for this.

Rebecca. Not for this?

Rosmer. It is true that I used to think that sooner or later our beautiful pure friendship would come to be attacked by calumny and suspicion—not on Kroll's part, for I never would have believed such a thing of him—but on the part of the coarse-minded and ignoble-eyed crowd. Yes, indeed; I had good reason enough for so jealously drawing a veil of concealment over our compact. It was a dangerous secret.

Rebecca. Why should we pay any heed to what all these other people think? You and I know that we have nothing to reproach ourselves with.

Rosmer. I? Nothing to reproach myself with? It is true enough that I thought so—until to-day. But now, now, Rebecca—

Rebecca. Yes? Now?

Rosmer. How am I to account to myself for Beata's horrible accusation?

Rebecca (*impetuously*). Oh, don't talk about Beata! Don't think about Beata any more! She is dead, and you seemed at last to have been able to get away from the thought of her.

Rosmer. Since I have learnt of this, it seems just as if she had come to life again in some uncanny fashion.

Rebecca. Oh no—you must not say that, John! You must not!

Rosmer. I tell you it is so. We must try and get to the bottom of it. How can she have strayed into such a woeful misunderstanding of me?

Rebecca. Surely you too are not beginning to doubt that she was very nearly insane?

Rosmer. Well, I cannot deny it is just of that fact that I feel I cannot be so altogether certain any longer. And besides—if it were so—

Rebecca. If it were so? What then?

Rosmer. What I mean is—where are we to look for the actual cause of her sick woman's fancies turning into insanity?

Rebecca. What good can it possibly do for you to indulge in such speculations!

Rosmer. I cannot do otherwise, Rebecca. I cannot let this doubt go on gnawing at my heart, however unwilling I may be to face it.

Rebecca. But it may become a real danger to you to be perpetually dwelling on this one lugubrious topic.

Rosmer (*walking about restlessly and absorbed in the idea*). I must have betrayed myself in some way or other. She must have noticed how happy I began to feel from the day you came to us.

Rebecca. Yes; but, dear, even if that were so—

Rosmer. You may be sure she did not fail to notice that we read the same books; that we sought one another's company, and discussed every new topic together. But I cannot understand it—because I was always so careful to spare her. When I look back, it seems to me that I did everything I could to keep her apart from our lives. Or did I not, Rebecca?

Rebecca. Yes, yes—undoubtedly you did.

Rosmer. And so did you, too. And notwithstanding that—! Oh, it is horrible to think of! To think that here she was—with her affection all distorted by illness—never saying a word—watching us—noticing everything and—and—misconstruing everything.

Rebecca (*wringing her hands*). Oh, I never ought to have come to Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. Just think what she must have suffered in silence! Think of all the horrible things her poor diseased brain must have led her to believe about us and store up in her mind about us!—Did she never speak to you of anything that could give you any kind of clue?

Rebecca (*as if startled*). To me! Do you suppose I should have remained here a day longer, if she had?

Rosmer. No, no—that is obvious. What a fight she must have fought—and fought alone, Rebecca! In despair, and all alone. And then, in the end, the poignant misery of her victory—which was also her accusation of us—in the mill-race! (*Throws himself into a chair, rests his elbows on the table, and hides his face in his hands.*)

Rebecca (*coming quietly up behind him*). Listen to me, John. If it were in your power to call Beata back—to you—to Rosmersholm—would you do it?

Rosmer. How can I tell what I would do or what I would not do! I have no thoughts for anything but the one thing—which is irrevocable.

Rebecca. You ought to be beginning to live now, John. You *were* beginning. You had freed yourself completely—on all sides. You were feeling so happy and so light-hearted—

Rosmer. I know—that is true enough. And then comes this overwhelming blow.

Rebecca (*standing behind him, with her arms on the back of his chair*). How beautiful it was when we used to sit there downstairs in the dusk—and helped each other to plan our lives out afresh. You wanted to catch hold of actual life—the actual life of the day, as you used to say. You wanted to pass from house to house like a guest who brought emancipation with him—to win over men's thoughts and wills to your own—to fashion noble men all around you, in a wider and wider circle—noble men!

Rosmer. Noble men and happy men.

Rebecca. Yes, happy men.

Rosmer. Because it is happiness that gives the soul nobility, Rebecca.

Rebecca. Do you not think suffering too?—the deepest suffering?

Rosmer. Yes, if one can win through it—conquer it—conquer it completely.

Rebecca. That is what *you* must do.

Rosmer (*shaking his head sadly*). I shall never conquer this completely. There will always be a doubt

confronting me—a question. I shall never again be able to lose myself in the enjoyment of what makes life so wonderfully beautiful.

Rebecca (*speaking over the back of his chair, softly*). What do you mean, John?

Rosmer (*looking up at her*). Calm and happy innocence.

Rebecca (*taking a step backwards*). Of course. Innocence. (*A short silence.*)

Rosmer (*resting his head on his hands with his elbows on the table, and looking straight in front of him*). How ingeniously—how systematically—she must have put one thing together with another! First of all she begins to have a suspicion as to my orthodoxy. How on earth did she get that idea in her mind? Any way, she did; and the idea grew into a certainty. And then—then, of course, it was easy for her to think everything else possible. (*Sits up in his chair and runs his hands through his hair.*) The wild fancies I am haunted with! I shall never get quit of them. I am certain of that—certain. They will always be starting up before me to remind me of the dead.

Rebecca. Like the White Horse of Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. Yes, like that. Rushing at me out of the dark—out of the silence.

Rebecca. And, because of this morbid fancy of yours, you are going to give up the hold you had just gained upon real life?

Rosmer. You are right, it seems hard—hard, Rebecca. But I have no power of choice in the matter. How do you think I could ever get the mastery over it?

Rebecca (*standing behind his chair*). By making new ties for yourself.

Rosmer (*starts, and looks up*). New ties?

Rebecca. Yes, new ties with the outside world. Live, work, do something! Do not sit here musing and brooding over insoluble conundrums.

Rosmer (*getting up*). New ties! (*Walks across the room, turns at the door and comes back again.*) A question occurs to my mind. Has it not occurred to you too, Rebecca?

Rebecca (*catching her breath*). Let me—hear—what it is.

Rosmer. What do you suppose will become of the tie between us, after to-day?

Rebecca. I think surely our friendship can endure, come what may.

Rosmer. Yes, but that is not exactly what I meant. I was thinking of what brought us together from the first, what links us so closely to one another—our common belief in the possibility of a man and a woman living together in chastity—

Rebecca. Yes, yes—what of it?

Rosmer. What I mean is—does not such a tie as that—such a tie as ours—seem to belong properly to a life lived in quiet, happy peacefulness?

Rebecca. Well?

Rosmer. But now I see stretching before me a life of strife and unrest and violent emotions. For I mean to live my life, Rebecca! I am not going to let myself be beaten to the ground by the dread of what may happen. I am not going to have my course of life prescribed for me, either by any living soul or by—another.

Rebecca. No, no—do not! Be a free man in everything, John!

Rosmer. Do you understand what is in my mind, then? Do you not know? Do you not see how I could best win my freedom from all these harrowing memories—from the whole sad past?

Rebecca. Tell me!

Rosmer. By setting up, in opposition to them, a new and living reality.

Rebecca (*feeling for the back of the chair*). A living—? What do you mean?

Rosmer (*coming closer to her*). Rebecca—suppose I asked you now—will you be my second wife?

Rebecca (*is speechless for a moment, then gives a cry of joy*). Your wife! Yours—! I!

Rosmer. Yes—let us try what that will do. We two shall be one. There must no longer be any empty place left by the dead in this house.

Rebecca. I—in Beata's place—?

Rosmer. And then that chapter of my life will be closed—completely closed, never to be reopened.

Rebecca (*in a low, trembling voice*). Do you think so, John?

Rosmer. It must be so! It must! I cannot—I will not—go through life with a dead body on my back. Help me to throw it off, Rebecca; and then let us stifle all memories in our sense of freedom, in joy, in passion. You shall be to me the only wife I have ever had.

Rebecca (*controlling herself*). Never speak of this again. I will never be your wife.

Rosmer. What! Never? Do you think, then, that you could not learn to love me? Is not our friendship already tinged with love?

Rebecca (*stopping her ears, as if in fear*). Don't speak like that, John! Don't say such things!

Rosmer (*catching her by the arm*). It is true! There is a growing possibility in the tie that is between us. I can see that you feel that, as well as I—do you not, Rebecca?

Rebecca (*controlling herself completely*). Listen. Let me tell you this—if you persist in this, I shall leave Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. Leave Rosmersholm! You! You cannot do that. It is impossible.

Rebecca. It is still more impossible for me to become your wife. Never, as long as I live, can I be that.

Rosmer (*looks at her in surprise*). You say "can"—and you say it so strangely. Why can you not?

Rebecca (*taking both his hands in hers*). Dear friend—for your own sake, as well as for mine, do not ask me why. (*Lets go of his hands.*) So, John. (*Goes towards the door on the left.*)

Rosmer. For the future the world will hold only one question for me—why?

Rebecca (*turns and looks at him*). In that case everything is at an end.

Rosmer. Between you and me?

Rebecca. Yes.

Rosmer. Things can never be at an end between us two. You shall never leave Rosmersholm.

Rebecca (*with her hand on the door-handle*). No, I

dare say I shall not. But, all the same, if you question me again, it will mean the end of everything.

Rosmer. The end of everything, all the same? How—?

Rebecca. Because then I shall go the way Beata went. Now you know, John.

Rosmer. Rebecca—!

Rebecca (*stops at the door and nods slowly*). Now you know. (*Goes out.*)

Rosmer (*stares in bewilderment at the shut door, and says to himself*): What—can it—mean?

ACT III

(SCENE.—*The sitting-room at Rosmersholm. The window and the hall-door are open. The morning sun is seen shining outside.* REBECCA, *dressed as in* ACT I., *is standing by the window, watering and arranging the flowers. Her work is lying on the arm-chair.* MRS. HELSETH *is going round the room with a feather brush, dusting the furniture.*)

Rebecca (*after a short pause*). I wonder why Mr. Rosmer is so late in coming down to-day?

Mrs. Helseth. Oh, he is often as late as this, miss. He is sure to be down directly.

Rebecca. Have you seen anything of him?

Mrs. Helseth. No, miss, except that as I took his coffee into his study he went into his bedroom to finish dressing.

Rebecca. The reason I ask is that he was not very well yesterday.

Mrs. Helseth. No, he did not look well. It made me wonder whether something had gone amiss between him and his brother-in-law.

Rebecca. What do you suppose could go amiss between them?

Mrs. Helseth. I can't say, miss. Perhaps it was that fellow Mortensgaard set them at loggerheads.

Rebecca. It is quite possible. Do you know anything of this Peter Mortensgaard?

Mrs. Helseth. Not I! How could you think so, miss—a man like that!

Rebecca. Because of that horrid paper he edits, you mean?

Mrs. Helseth. Not only because of that, miss. I suppose you have heard that a certain married woman, whose husband had deserted her, had a child by him?

Rebecca. I have heard it; but of course that was long before I came here.

Mrs. Helseth. Bless me, yes—he was quite a young man then. But she might have had more sense than he had. He wanted to marry her, too, but that could not be done; and so he had to pay heavily for it. But since then—my word!—Mortensgaard has risen in the world. There are lots of people who run after him now.

Rebecca. I believe most of the poor people turn to him first when they are in any trouble.

Mrs. Helseth. Oh, not only the poor people, miss—

Rebecca (*glancing at her unobserved*). Indeed?

Mrs. Helseth (*standing at the sofa, dusting vigorously*). People you would least expect, sometimes, miss.

Rebecca (*arranging the flowers*). Yes, but that is only an idea of yours, Mrs. Helseth. You cannot know that for certain.

Mrs. Helseth. You think I don't know anything about that for certain, do you, miss? Indeed I do. Because—if I must let out the secret at last—I carried a letter to Mortensgaard myself once.

Rebecca (*turns round*). No—did you!

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, that I did. And that letter, let me tell you, was written here—at Rosmersholm.

Rebecca. Really, Mrs. Helseth?

Mrs. Helseth. I give you my word it was, miss. And it was written on good note-paper—and sealed with beautiful red sealing-wax.

Rebecca. And you were entrusted with the delivery of it? Dear Mrs. Helseth, it is not very difficult to guess whom it was from.

Mrs. Helseth. Who, then?

Rebecca. Naturally, it was something that poor Mrs. Rosmer in her invalid state—

Mrs. Helseth. Well, you have mentioned her name, miss—not I.

Rebecca. But what was in the letter?—No, of course, you cannot know that.

Mrs. Helseth. Hm!—it is just possible I may know, all the same.

Rebecca. Did she tell you what she was writing about, then?

Mrs. Helseth. No, she did not do that. But when Mortensgaard had read it, he set to work and cross-questioned me, so that I got a very good idea of what was in it.

Rebecca. What do you think was in it, then? Oh, dear, good Mrs. Helseth, do tell me!

Mrs. Helseth. Certainly not, miss. Not for worlds.

Rebecca. Oh, you can tell me. You and I are such friends, you know.

Mrs. Helseth. Heaven forbid I should tell you anything about *that*, miss. I shall not tell you anything, except that it was some dreadful idea that they had gone and put into my poor sick mistress's head.

Rebecca. Who had put it into her head?

Mrs. Helseth. Wicked people, miss. Wicked people.

Rebecca. Wicked—?

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, I say it again—very wicked people, they must have been.

Rebecca. And what do you think it could be?

Mrs. Helseth. Oh, I know what I think—but, please Heaven, I'll keep *my* mouth shut. At the same time, there is a certain lady in the town—hm!

Rebecca. I can see you mean Mrs. Kroll.

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, she is a queer one, she is. She has always been very much on the high horse with me. And she has never looked with any friendly eye on you, either, miss.

Rebecca. Do you think Mrs. Rosmer was quite in her right mind when she wrote that letter to Mortensgaard?

Mrs. Helseth. It is so difficult to tell, miss. I certainly don't think she was quite out of her mind.

Rebecca. But you know she seemed to go quite distracted when she learnt that she would never be able to have a child. That was when her madness first showed itself.

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, that had a terrible effect on her, poor lady.

Rebecca (*taking up her work, and sitting down on a chair by the window*). But, in other respects, do you not think that was really a good thing for Mr. Rosmer, Mrs. Helseth?

Mrs. Helseth. What, miss?

Rebecca. That there were no children?

Mrs. Helseth. Hm!—I really do not know what to say to that.

Rebecca. Believe me, it was best for him. Mr. Rosmer was never meant to be surrounded by crying children.

Mrs. Helseth. Little children do not cry at Rosmersholm, Miss West.

Rebecca (*looking at her*). Not cry?

Mrs. Helseth. No. In this house, little children have never been known to cry, as long as any one can remember.

Rebecca. That is very strange.

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, isn't it, miss? But it runs in the family. And there is another thing that is just as strange; when they grow up they never laugh—never laugh, all their lives.

Rebecca. But that would be extraordinary—

Mrs. Helseth. Have you ever once heard or seen Mr. Rosmer laugh, miss?

Rebecca. No—now that I think of it, I almost believe you are right. But I fancy most of the folk hereabouts laugh very little.

Mrs. Helseth. That is quite true. People say it began at Rosmersholm, and I expect it spread like a sort of infection.

Rebecca. You are a sagacious woman, Mrs. Helseth!

Mrs. Helseth. Oh, you mustn't sit there and make game of me, miss. (*Listens.*) Hush, hush—Mr. Rosmer is coming down. He doesn't like to see brooms about. (*Goes out by the door on the right.*

ROSMER, *with his stick and hat in his hand, comes in from the lobby.*)

Rosmer. Good-morning, Rebecca.

Rebecca. Good-morning, dear. (*She goes on working for a little while in silence.*) Are you going out?

Rosmer. Yes.

Rebecca. It is such a lovely day.

Rosmer. You did not come up to see me this morning.

Rebecca. No—I didn't. Not to-day.

Rosmer. Don't you mean to do so in future, either?

Rebecca. I cannot say yet, dear.

Rosmer. Has anything come for me?

Rebecca. The "County News" has come.

Rosmer. The "County News"!

Rebecca. There it is, on the table.

Rosmer (*putting down his hat and stick*). Is there anything—?

Rebecca. Yes.

Rosmer. And you did not send it up to me—

Rebecca. You will read it quite soon enough.

Rosmer. Well, let us see. (*Takes up the paper and stands by the table reading it.*) What!—"cannot pronounce too emphatic a warning against unprincipled deserters." (*Looks at her.*) They call me a deserter, Rebecca.

Rebecca. They mention no names at all.

Rosmer. It comes to the same thing. (*Goes on reading.*) "Secret traitors to the good cause."—"Judas-like creatures, who shamelessly confess their apostasy as soon as they think the most opportune and—most profitable moment has arrived."—"A reckless outrage on the fair fame of honoured ancestors"—"in the expectation that those who are enjoying a brief spell of authority will not disappoint them of a suitable reward." (*Lays the paper down on the table.*) And they write that of me—these men who have known me so long and so intimately—write a thing that they do not even believe themselves! They know there is not a single word of truth in it—and yet they write it.

Rebecca. There is more of it yet.

Rosmer (*taking up the paper again*). "Make some

allowance for inexperience and want of judgment"—"a pernicious influence which, very possibly, has extended even to matters which for the present we will refrain from publicly discussing or condemning." (*Looks at her.*) What does that mean?

Rebecca. That is a hit at me, obviously.

Rosmer (*laying down the paper*). Rebecca, this is the conduct of dishonourable men.

Rebecca. Yes, it seems to me they have no right to talk about Mortensgaard.

Rosmer (*walking up and down the room*). They *must* be saved from this sort of thing. All the good that is in men is destroyed, if it is allowed to go on. But it shall not be so! How happy—how happy I should feel if I could succeed in bringing a little light into all this murky ugliness.

Rebecca (*getting up*). I am sure of it. *There* is something great, something splendid, for you to live for!

Rosmer. Just think of it—if I could wake them to a real knowledge of themselves—bring them to be angry with and ashamed of themselves—induce them to be at one with each other in toleration, in love, Rebecca!

Rebecca. Yes! Give yourself up entirely to that task, and you will see that you will succeed.

Rosmer. I think it might be done. What happiness it would be to live one's life, then! No more hateful strife—only emulation; every eye fixed on the same goal; every man's will, every man's thoughts moving forward—upward—each in its own inevitable path! Happiness for all—and through the efforts of all! (*Looks out of the window as he speaks, then gives a start and says gloomily:*) Ah! not through me.

Rebecca. Not—not through you?

Rosmer. Nor for me, either.

Rebecca. Oh, John, have no such doubts.

Rosmer. Happiness, dear Rebecca, means first and foremost the calm, joyous sense of innocence.

Rebecca (*staring in front of her*). Ah, innocence—

Rosmer. You need fear nothing on that score. But I—

Rebecca. You least of all men!

Rosmer (*pointing out of the window*). The mill-race.

Rebecca. Oh, John!— (MRS. HELSETH *looks in through the door on the left.*)

Mrs. Helseth. Miss West!

Rebecca. Presently, presently. Not now.

Mrs. Helseth. Just a word, miss! (REBECCA *goes to the door.* MRS. HELSETH *tells her something, and they whisper together for a moment; then* MRS. HELSETH *nods and goes away.*)

Rosmer (*uneasily*). Was it anything for me?

Rebecca. No, only something about the housekeeping. You ought to go out into the open air now, John dear. You should go for a good long walk.

Rosmer (*taking up his hat*). Yes, come along; we will go together.

Rebecca. No, dear, I can't just now. You must go by yourself. But shake off all these gloomy thoughts—promise me that!

Rosmer. I shall never be able to shake them quite off, I am afraid.

Rebecca. Oh, but how can you let such groundless fancies take such a hold on you!

Rosmer. Unfortunately they are not so groundless as you think, dear. I have lain, thinking them over, all night. Perhaps Beata saw things truly after all.

Rebecca. In what way do you mean?

Rosmer. Saw things truly when she believed I loved you, Rebecca.

Rebecca. Truly in *that* respect?

Rosmer (*laying his hat down on the table*). This is the question I have been wrestling with—whether we two have deluded ourselves the whole time, when we have been calling the tie between us merely friendship.

Rebecca. Do you mean, then, that the right name for it would have been—?

Rosmer. Love. Yes, dear, that is what I mean. Even while Beata was alive, it was you that I gave all my thoughts to. It was you alone I yearned for. It was with you that I experienced peaceful, joyful, passionless happiness. When we consider it rightly, Rebecca, our life together began like the sweet, mysterious love of two children for one another—free from

desire or any thought of anything more. Did you not feel it in that way too? Tell me.

Rebecca (*struggling with herself*). Oh, I do not know what to answer.

Rosmer. And it was this life of intimacy, with one another and for one another, that we took to be friendship. No, dear—the tie between us has been a spiritual marriage—perhaps from the very first day. That is why I am guilty. I had no right to it—no right to it for Beata's sake.

Rebecca. No right to a happy life? Do you believe that, John?

Rosmer. She looked at the relations between us through the eyes of *her* love—judged them after the nature of *her* love. And it was only natural. She could not have judged them otherwise than she did.

Rebecca. But how can you so accuse yourself for Beata's delusions?

Rosmer. It was for love of me—in her own way—that she threw herself into the mill-race. That fact is certain, Rebecca. I can never get beyond that.

Rebecca. Oh, do not think of anything else but the great, splendid task that you are going to devote your life to!

Rosmer (*shaking his head*). It can never be carried through. Not by me. Not after what I know now.

Rebecca. Why not by you?

Rosmer. Because no cause can ever triumph which has its beginnings in guilt.

Rebecca (*impetuously*). Oh, these are nothing but prejudices you have inherited—these doubts, these fears, these scruples! You have a legend here that your dead return to haunt you in the form of white horses. This seems to me to be something of that sort.

Rosmer. Be that as it may, what difference does it make if I cannot shake it off? Believe me, Rebecca, it is as I say—any cause which is to win a lasting victory must be championed by a man who is joyous and innocent.

Rebecca. But is joy so absolutely indispensable to *you*, John?

Rosmer. Joy? Yes, indeed it is.

Rebecca. To you, who never laugh?

Rosmer. Yes, in spite of that. Believe me, I have a great capacity for joy.

Rebecca. Now you really must go out, dear—for a long walk—a really long one, do you hear? There is your hat, and there is your stick.

Rosmer. (*taking them from her*). Thank you. And you won't come too?

Rebecca. No, no, I can't come now.

Rosmer. Very well. You are none the less always with me now. (*Goes out by the entrance hall. After a moment* REBECCA *peeps out from behind the door which he has left open. Then she goes to the door on the right, which she opens.*)

Rebecca (*in a whisper*). Now, Mrs. Helseth. You can let him come in now. (*Crosses to the window. A moment later,* KROLL *comes in from the right. He bows to her silently and formally and keeps his hat in his hand.*)

Kroll. Has he gone, then?

Rebecca. Yes.

Kroll. Does he generally stay out long?

Rebecca. Yes. But to-day he is in a very uncertain mood—so, if you do not want to meet him—

Kroll. Certainly not. It is you I wish to speak to—and quite alone.

Rebecca. Then we had better make the best of our time. Please sit down. (*She sits down in an easy-chair by the window.* KROLL *takes a chair beside her.*)

Kroll. Miss West, you can scarcely have any idea how deeply pained and unhappy I am over this revolution that has taken place in John Rosmer's ideas.

Rebecca. We were prepared for that being so—at first.

Kroll. Only at first?

Rosmer. Mr. Rosmer hoped confidently that sooner or later you would take your place beside him.

Kroll. I?

Rebecca. You and all his other friends.

Kroll. That should convince you how feeble his

judgment is on any matter concerning his fellow-creatures and the affairs of real life.

Rebecca. In any case, now that he feels the absolute necessity of cutting himself free on all sides—

Kroll. Yes; but, let me tell you, that is exactly what I do not believe.

Rebecca. What do you believe, then?

Kroll. I believe it is you that are, at the bottom of the whole thing.

Rebecca. Your wife put that into your head, Mr. Kroll.

Kroll. It does not matter who put it into my head. The point is this, that I feel grave doubts—exceedingly grave doubts—when I recall and think over the whole of your behaviour since you came here.

Rebecca (*looking at him*). I have a notion that there was a time when you had an exceedingly strong *belief* in me, dear Mr. Kroll—I might almost say, a warm belief.

Kroll (*in a subdued voice*). I believe you could bewitch any one—if you set yourself to do it.

Rebecca. And you say I set myself to do it!

Kroll. Yes, you did. I am no longer such a simpleton as to suppose that sentiment entered into your little game at all. You simply wanted to secure yourself admission to Rosmersholm—to establish yourself here. That was what I was to help you to. I see it now.

Rebecca. Then you have completely forgotten that it was Beata that begged and entreated me to come and live here.

Kroll. Yes, because you had bewitched her too. Are you going to pretend that friendship is the name for what she came to feel towards you? It was idolatry—adoration. It degenerated into a—what shall I call it?—a sort of desperate passion. Yes, that is just the word for it.

Rebecca. Have the goodness to remember the condition your sister was in. As far as I am concerned, I do not think I can be said to be particularly emotional in any way.

Kroll. No, you certainly are not. But that makes you all the more dangerous to those whom you wish to

get into your power. It comes easy to you to act with deliberation and careful calculation, just because you have a cold heart.

Rebecca. Cold? Are you so sure of that?

Kroll. I am certain of it now. Otherwise you could not have pursued your object here so unswervingly, year after year. Yes, yes—you have gained what you wanted. You have got him and everything else here into your power. But, to carry out your schemes, you have not scrupled to make him unhappy.

Rebecca. That is not true. It is not I; it is you yourself that have made him unhappy.

Kroll. I!

Rebecca. Yes, by leading him to imagine that he was responsible for the terrible end that overtook Beata.

Kroll. Did that affect him so deeply, then?

Rebecca. Of course. A man of such gentle disposition as he—

Kroll. I imagined that one of your so-called "emancipated" men would know how to overcome any scruples. But there it is! Oh, yes—as a matter of fact it turned out just as I expected. The descendant of the men who are looking at us from these walls need not think he can break loose from what has been handed down as an inviolable inheritance from generation to generation.

Rebecca (*looking thoughtfully in front of her*). John Rosmer's nature is deeply rooted in his ancestors. That is certainly very true.

Kroll. Yes, and you ought to have taken that into consideration, if you had had any sympathy for him. But I dare say you were incapable of that sort of consideration. Your starting-point is so very widely removed from his, you see.

Rebecca. What do you mean by my starting-point?

Kroll. I mean the starting-point of origin—of parentage, Miss West.

Rebecca. I see. Yes, it is quite true that my origin is very humble. But nevertheless—

Kroll. I am not alluding to rank or position. I am thinking of the moral aspect of your origin.

Rebecca. Of my origin? In what respect?

Kroll. In respect of your birth generally.

Rebecca. What are you saying!

Kroll. I am only saying it because it explains the whole of your conduct.

Rebecca. I do not understand. Be so good as to tell me exactly what you mean.

Kroll. I really thought you did not need telling. Otherwise it would seem a very strange thing that you let yourself be adopted by Dr. West—

Rebecca (*getting up*). Oh, that is it! Now I understand.

Kroll. And took his name. Your mother's name was Gamvik.

Rebecca (*crossing the room*). My father's name was Gamvik, Mr. Kroll.

Kroll. Your mother's occupation must, of course, have brought her continually into contact with the district physician.

Rebecca. You are quite right.

Kroll. And then he takes you to live with him, immediately upon your mother's death. He treats you harshly, and yet you stay with him. You know that he will not leave you a single penny—as a matter of fact you only got a box of books—and yet you endure living with him, put up with his behaviour, and nurse him to the end.

Rebecca (*comes to the table and looks at him scornfully*). And my doing all that makes it clear to you that there was something immoral—something criminal—about my birth!

Kroll. What you did for him, I attributed to an unconscious filial instinct. And, as far as the rest of it goes, I consider that the whole of your conduct has been the outcome of your origin.

Rebecca (*hotly*). But there is not a single word of truth in what you say! And I can prove it! Dr. West had not come to Finmark when I was born.

Kroll. Excuse me, Miss West. He went there a year before you were born. I have ascertained that.

Rebecca. You are mistaken, I tell you! You are absolutely mistaken!

Kroll. You said here, the day before yesterday, that you were twenty-nine—going on for thirty.

Rebecca. Really? Did I say that?

Kroll. Yes, you did. And from that I can calculate—

Rebecca. Stop! That will not help you to calculate. For, I may as well tell you at once, I am a year older than I give myself out to be.

Kroll (*smiling incredulously*). Really? That is something new. How is that?

Rebecca. When I had passed my twenty-fifth birthday, I thought I was getting altogether too old for an unmarried girl, so I resolved to tell a lie and take a year off my age.

Kroll. You—an emancipated woman—cherishing prejudices as to the marriageable age!

Rebecca. I know it was a silly thing to do—and ridiculous, too. But every one has some prejudice or another that they cannot get quite rid of. We are like that.

Kroll. Maybe. But my calculation may be quite correct, all the same; because Dr. West was up in Finmark for a flying visit the year before he was appointed.

Rebecca (*impetuously*). That is not true!

Kroll. Isn't it?

Rebecca. No. My mother never mentioned it.

Kroll. Didn't she, really!

Rebecca. No, never. Nor Dr. West, either. Never a word of it.

Kroll. Might that not be because they both had good reason to jump over a year?—just as you have done yourself, Miss West? Perhaps it is a family failing.

Rebecca (*walking about, wringing her hands*). It is impossible. It is only something you want to make me believe. Nothing in the world will make me believe it. It cannot be true! Nothing in the world—

Kroll (*getting up*). But, my dear Miss West, why in Heaven's name do you take it in this way? You quite alarm me! What am I to believe and think?

Rebecca. Nothing. Neither believe nor think anything.

Kroll. Then you really must give me some explanation of your taking this matter—this possibility—so much to heart.

Rebecca (*controlling herself*). It is quite obvious, I should think, Mr. Kroll. I have no desire for people here to think me an illegitimate child.

Krol. Quite so. Well, well, let us be content with your explanation, for the present. But you see that is another point on which you have cherished a certain —prejudice.

Rebecca. Yes, that is quite true.

Kroll. And it seems to me that very much the same applies to most of this "emancipation" of yours, as you call it. Your reading has introduced you to a hotch-potch of new ideas and opinions; you have made a certain acquaintance with researches that are going on in various directions—researches that seem to you to upset a good many ideas that people have hitherto considered incontrovertible and unassailable. But all this has never gone any further than knowledge in your case, Miss West—a mere matter of the intellect. It has not got into your blood.

Rebecca (*thoughtfully*). Perhaps you are right.

Kroll. Yes, only test yourself, and you will see! And if it is true in your case, it is easy to recognise how true it must be in John Rosmer's. Of course it is madness, pure and simple. He will be running headlong to his ruin if he persists in coming openly forward and proclaiming himself an apostate! Just think of it—he, with his shy disposition! Think of *him* disowned—hounded out of the circle to which he has always belonged—exposed to the uncompromising attacks of all the best people in the place. Nothing would ever make him the man to endure that.

Rebecca. He *must* endure it! It is too late now for him to draw back.

Kroll. Not a bit too late—not by any means too late. What has happened can be hushed up—or at any rate can be explained away as a purely temporary, though regrettable, aberration. But—there is one step that it is absolutely essential he should take.

Rebecca. And that is?

Kroll. You must get him to legalise his position, Miss West.

Rebecca. The position in which he stands to me?

Kroll. Yes. You must see that you get him to do that.

Rebecca. Then you can't rid yourself of the conviction that the relations between us need "legalising," as you say?

Kroll. I do not wish to go any more precisely into the question. But I certainly have observed that the conditions under which it always seems easiest for people to abandon all their so-called prejudices are when —ahem!

Rebecca. When it is a question of the relations between a man and a woman, I suppose you mean?

Kroll. Yes—to speak candidly—that is what I mean.

Rebecca (*walks across the room and looks out of the window*). I was on the point of saying that I wish you had been right, Mr. Kroll.

Kroll. What do you mean by that? You say it so strangely!

Rebecca. Oh, nothing! Do not let us talk any more about it.—Ah, there he is!

Kroll. Already! I will go, then.

Rebecca (*turning to him*). No—stay here, and you will hear something.

Kroll. Not now. I do not think I could bear to see him.

Rebecca. I beg you to stay. Please do, or you will regret it later. It is the last time I shall ever ask you to do anything.

Kroll (*looks at her in surprise, and lays his hat down*). Very well, Miss West. It shall be as you wish. (*A short pause. Then* ROSMER *comes in from the hall.*)

Rosmer (*stops at the door, as he sees* KROLL). What! you here?

Rebecca. He wanted to avoid meeting you, John.

Kroll (*involuntarily*). "John?"

Rebecca. Yes, Mr. Kroll. John and I call each other by our Christian names. That is a natural consequence of the relations between us.

Kroll. Was that what I was to hear if I stayed?

Rebecca. Yes, that and something else.

Rosmer (*coming into the room*). What is the object of your visit here to-day?

Kroll. I wanted to make one more effort to stop you, and win you back.

Rosmer (*pointing to the newspaper*). After *that?*

Kroll. I did not write it.

Rosmer. Did you take any steps to prevent its appearing?

Kroll. That would have been acting unjustifiably towards the cause I serve. And, besides that, I had no power to prevent it.

Rebecca (*tears the newspaper into pieces, which she crumples up and throws into the back of the stove*). There! Now it is out of sight; let it be out of mind too. Because there will be no more of that sort of thing, John.

Kroll. Indeed, I wish you could ensure that.

Rebecca. Come, and let us sit down, dear—all three of us. Then I will tell you all about it.

Rosmer (*sitting down involuntarily*). What has come over you, Rebecca? You are so unnaturally calm—What is it?

Rebecca. The calmness of determination. (*Sits down.*) Please sit down too, Mr. Kroll. (*He takes a seat on the couch.*)

Rosmer. Determination, you say. Determination to do what?

Rebecca. I want to give you back what you need in order to live your life. You shall have your happy innocence back, dear friend.

Rosmer. But what do you mean?

Rebecca. I will just tell you what happened. That is all that is necessary.

Rosmer. Well?

Rebecca. When I came down here from Finmark with Dr. West, it seemed to me that a new, great, wide world was opened to me. Dr. West had given me an erratic sort of education—had taught me all the odds and ends that I knew about life then. (*Has an evident struggle with herself, and speaks in barely audible tones.*) And then—

Kroll. And then?

Rosmer. But, Rebecca—I know all this.

Rebecca (*collecting herself*). Yes—that is true enough. You know it only too well.

Kroll (*looking fixedly at her*). Perhaps it would be better if I left you.

Rebecca. No, stay where you are, dear Mr. Kroll. (*To* ROSMER.) Well, this was how it was. I wanted to play my part in the new day that was dawning—to have a share in all the new ideas. Mr. Kroll told me one day that Ulrik Brendel had had a great influence over you once, when you were a boy. I thought it might be possible for me to resume that influence here.

Rosmer. Did you come here with a covert design?

Rebecca. What I wanted was that we two should go forward together on the road towards freedom—always forward, and further forward! But there was that gloomy, insurmountable barrier between you and a full, complete emancipation.

Rosmer. What barrier do you mean?

Rebecca. I mean, John, that you could never have attained fredom except in the full glory of the sunshine. And, instead of that, here you were—ailing and languishing in the gloom of such a marriage as yours.

Rosmer. You have never spoken to me of my marriage in that way, before to-day.

Rebecca. No, I did not dare, for fear of frightening you.

Kroll (*nodding to* ROSMER). You hear that!

Rebecca (*resuming*). But I saw quite well where your salvation lay—your only salvation. And so I acted.

Rosmer. How do you mean—you acted?

Kroll. Do you mean that?

Rebecca. Yes, John. (*Gets up.*) No, do not get up. Nor you either, Mr. Kroll. But we must let in the daylight now. It was not you, John. You are innocent. It was I that lured—that ended by luring—Beata into the tortuous path—

Rosmer (*springing up*). Rebecca!

Kroll (*getting up*). Into the tortuous path!

Rebecca. Into the path that—led to the mill-race. Now you know it, both of you.

Rosmer (*as if stunned*). But I do not understand—What is she standing there saying? I do not understand a word—

Kroll. Yes, yes. I begin to understand.

Rosmer. But what did you do? What did you find to tell her? Because there was nothing—absolutely nothing!

Rebecca. She got to know that you were determined to emancipate yourself from all your old prejudices.

Rosmer. Yes, but at that time I had come to no decision.

Rebecca. I knew that you soon would come to one.

Kroll (*nodding to* ROSMER). Aha!

Rosmer. Well—and what more? I want to know everything now.

Rebecca. Some time afterwards, I begged and implored her to let me leave Rosmersholm.

Rosmer. Why did you want to leave here—then?

Rebecca. I did not want to. I wanted to remain where I was. But I told her that it would be best for us all if I went away in time. I let her infer that if I remained here any longer I could not tell what—what—might happen.

Rosmer. That is what you said and did, then?

Rebecca. Yes, John.

Rosmer. That is what you referred to when you said that you "acted"?

Rebecca (*in a broken voice*). Yes, that was it.

Rosmer (*after a pause*). Have you confessed everything now, Rebecca?

Rebecca. Yes.

Kroll. Not everything.

Rebecca (*looking at him in terror*). What else can there be?

Kroll. Did you not eventually lead Beata to believe that it was necessary—not merely that it should be best—but that it was necessary, both for your own sake and for John's, that you should go away somewhere else as soon as possible?—Well?

Rebecca (*speaking low and indistinctly*). Perhaps I did say something of the sort.

Rosmer (*sinking into a chair by the window*). And

she, poor sick creature, believed in this tissue of lies and deceit! Believed in it so completely—so absolutely! (*Looks up at* REBECCA.) And she never came to me about it—never said a word! Ah, Rebecca—I see it in your face—*you* dissuaded her from doing so.

Rebecca. You know she had taken it into her head that she, a childless wife, had no right to be here. And so she persuaded herself that her duty to you was to give place to another.

Rosmer. And you—you did nothing to rid her mind of such an idea?

Rebecca. No.

Kroll. Perhaps you encouraged her in the idea? Answer! Did you not do so?

Rebecca. That was how she understood me, I believe.

Rosmer. Yes, yes—and she bowed to your will in everything. And so she gave place. (*Springs up.*) How could you—how could you go on with this terrible tragedy!

Rebecca. I thought there were two lives here to choose between, John.

Kroll (*severely and with authority*). You had no right to make any such choice.

Rebecca (*impetuously*). Surely you do not think I acted with cold and calculating composure! I am a different woman now, when I am telling you this, from what I was then. And I believe two different kinds of will can exist at the same time in one person. I wanted Beata away—in one way or the other; but I never thought it would happen, all the same. At every step I ventured and risked, I seemed to hear a voice in me crying: "No further! Not a step further!" And yet, at the same time, I *could* not stop. I *had* to venture a little bit further—just one step. And then another—and always another—and at last it happened. That is how such things go of themselves. (*A short silence.*)

Rosmer (*to* REBECCA). And how do you think it will go with *you* in the future?—after this?

Rebecca. Things must go with me as they can. It is of very little consequence.

Kroll. Not a word suggestive of remorse! Perhaps you feel none?

Rebecca (*dismissing his remark coldly*). Excuse me, Mr. Kroll, that is a matter that is no concern of any one else's. That is an account I must settle with myself.

Kroll (*to* ROSMER). And this is the woman you have been living under the same roof with—in relations of the completest confidence. (*Looks up at the portraits on the walls.*) If only those that are gone could look down now!

Rosmer. Are you going into the town?

Kroll (*taking up his hat*). Yes. The sooner the better.

Rosmer (*taking his hat also*). Then I will go with you.

Kroll. You will! Ah, I thought we had not quite lost you.

Rosmer. Come, then, Kroll. Come! (*They both go out into the hall without looking at* REBECCA. *After a minute* REBECCA *goes cautiously to the window and peeps out between the flowers.*)

Rebecca (*speaking to herself, half aloud*). Not over the bridge to-day either. He is going round. Never over the mill-race—never. (*Comes away from the window.*) As I thought! (*She goes over to the bell, and rings it. Soon afterwards* MRS. HELSETH *comes in from the right.*)

Mrs. Helseth. What is it, miss?

Rebecca. Mrs. Helseth, will you be so good as to fetch my travelling trunk down from the loft?

Mrs. Helseth. Your trunk?

Rebecca. Yes, the brown hair-trunk, you know.

Mrs. Helseth. Certainly, miss. But, bless my soul, are you going away on a journey, miss?

Rebecca. Yes—I am going away on a journey, Mrs. Helseth.

Mrs. Helseth. And immediately!

Rebecca. As soon as I have packed.

Mrs. Helseth. I never heard of such a thing! But you are coming back again soon, I suppose, miss?

Rebecca. I am never coming back again.

Mrs. Helseth. Never! But, my goodness, what is to become of us at Rosmersholme if Miss West is not here any longer? Just as everything was making poor Mr. Rosmer so happy and comfortable!

Rebecca. Yes, but to-day I have had a fright, Mrs. Helseth.

Mrs. Helseth. A fright! Good heavens—how?

Rebecca. I fancy I have had a glimpse of the White Horse.

Mrs. Helseth. Of the White Horse! In broad daylight!

Rebecca. Ah! they are out both early and late, the White Horses of Rosmersholm. (*Crosses the room.*) Well—we were speaking of my trunk, Mrs. Helseth.

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, miss. Your trunk.

(*They both go out to the right.*)

ACT IV

(SCENE.—*The same room in the late evening. The lamp, with a shade on it, is burning on the table.* REBECCA *is standing by the table, packing some small articles in a travelling-bag. Her cloak, hat, and the white crochetted shawl are hanging on the back of the couch.* MRS. HELSETH *comes in from the right.*)

Mrs. Helseth (*speaking in low tones and with a reserved manner*). Yes, all your things have been taken down, miss. They are in the kitchen passage.

Rebecca. Thank you. You have ordered the carriage?

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, miss. The coachman wants to know what time he shall bring it round.

Rebecca. I think at about eleven o'clock. The boat goes at midnight.

Mrs. Helseth (*with a little hesitation*). But what about Mr. Rosmer? Suppose he is not back by that time?

Rebecca. I shall start, all the same. If I should not see him, you can tell him I will write to him—a long letter, say that.

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, I dare say it will be all right—to write. But, poor dear, I really think that you ought to try and have a talk with him once more.

Rebecca. Perhaps I ought.—Or perhaps not, after all.

Mrs. Helseth. Dear, dear! I never thought I should live to see such a thing as this!

Rebecca. What did you think, then, Mrs. Helseth?

Mrs. Helseth. To tell the truth, miss, I thought Mr. Rosmer was an honester man than that.

Rebecca. Honester?

Mrs. Helseth. Yes, miss, that is the truth.

Rebecca. But, my dear Mrs. Helseth, what do you mean by that?

Mrs. Helseth. I mean what is true and right, miss. He should not get out of it in *this* way—that he shouldn't.

Rebecca (*looking at her*). Now look here, Mrs. Helseth. Tell me, honestly and frankly, why you think I am going away.

Mrs. Helseth. Good Lord, miss—because it is necessary, I suppose.—Well, well!—Still, I certainly do not think Mr. Rosmer has behaved well. There was some excuse in Mortensgaard's case, because the woman's husband was still alive; so that it was impossible for *them* to marry, however much they wished it. But Mr. Rosmer, he could—ahem!

Rebecca (*with a faint smile*). Is it possible that you could think such things about me and Mr. Rosmer?

Mrs. Helseth. Not for a moment—until to-day, I mean.

Rebecca. But why to-day?

Mrs. Helseth. Well, after all the horrible things they tell me one may see in the papers about Mr. Rosmer—

Rebecca. Ah!

Mrs. Helseth. What I mean is this—if a man can go over to Mortensgaard's religon, you may believe him capable of anything. And that's the truth.

Rebecca. Yes, very likely. But about me? What have you got to say about me?

Mrs. Helseth. Well, I am sure, miss—I do not think you are so greatly to be blamed. It is not always so.

easy for a lone woman to resist, I dare say. We are all human after all, Miss West.

Rebecca. That is very true, Mrs. Helseth. We are all human, after all.—What are you listening to?

Mrs. Helseth (*in a low voice*). Good Lord!—I believe that is him coming now.

Rebecca (*with a start*). In spite of everything, then—! (*Speaks with determination.*) Very well. So be it. (ROSMER *comes in from the hall. He sees the luggage, and turns to* REBECCA.)

Rosmer. What does this mean?

Rebecca. I am going away.

Rosmer. At once?

Rebecca. Yes. (*To* MRS. HELSETH.) Eleven o'clock, then.

Mrs. Helseth. Very well, miss. (*Goes out to the right.*)

Rosmer (*after a short pause*). Where are you going, Rebecca?

Rebecca. I am taking the boat for the north.

Rosmer. North? What are you going there for?

Rebecca. It is where I came from.

Rosmer. But you have no more ties there now.

Rebecca. I have none here, either.

Rosmer. What do you propose to do?

Rebecca. I do not know. I only want to make an end of it.

Rosmer. Make an end of what?

Rebecca. Rosmersholm has broken me.

Rosmer (*more attentively*). What is that?

Rebecca. Broken me utterly. I had a will of my own, and some courage, when I came here. Now I am crushed under the law of strangers. I do not think I shall have the courage to begin anything else in the world after this.

Rosmer. Why not? What do you mean by being crushed under a law—?

Rebecca. Dear friend, do not let us talk about that now.—Tell me what passed between you and Mr. Kroll.

Rosmer. We have made our peace.

Rebecca. Quite so. So it came to that.

Rosmer. He got together all our old circle of friends at his house. They convinced me that the work of ennobling men's souls was not in my line at all. Besides, it is such a hopeless task, any way. I shall let it alone.

Rebecca. Well, perhaps it is better so.

Rosmer. Do you say *that* now? Is that what your opinion is now?

Rebecca. I have come to that opinion—in the last day or two.

Rosmer. You are lying, Rebecca.

Rebecca. Lying—?

Rosmer. Yes, lying. You have never believed in me. You have never believed me to be the man to lead the cause to victory.

Rebecca. I have believed that we two together would be equal to it.

Rosmer. That is not true. You have believed that you could accomplish something big in life yourself—that you could use me to further your plans—that I might be useful to you in the pursuit of your object. That is what you have believed.

Rebecca. Listen to me, John—

Rosmer (*sitting down wearily on the couch*). Oh, let me be! I see the whole thing clearly now. I have been like a glove in your hands.

Rebecca. Listen to me, John. Let us talk this thing over. It will be for the last time. (*Sits down in a chair by the couch.*) I had intended to write to you about it all—when I had gone back north. But it is much better that you should hear it at once.

Rosmer. Have you something more to tell, then?

Rebecca. The most important part of it all.

Rosmer. What do you mean?

Rebecca. Something that you have never suspected. Something that puts all the rest in its true light.

Rosmer (*shaking his head*). I do not understand, at all.

Rebecca. It is quite true that at one time I did play my cards so as to secure admission to Rosmersholm. My idea was that I should succeed in doing well for

myself here—either in one way or in another, you understand.

Rosmer. Well, you succeeded in carrying your scheme through, too.

Rebecca. I believe I could have carried anything through—at that time. For then I still had the courage of a free will. I had no one else to consider, nothing to turn me from my path. But then began what has broken down my will and filled the whole of my life with dread and wretchedness.

Rosmer. What began? Speak so that I can understand you.

Rebecca. There came over me—a wild, uncontrollable passion—. Oh, John—!

Rosmer. Passion? You—! For what?

Rebecca. For you.

Rosmer (*getting up*). What does this mean!

Rebecca (*preventing him*). Sit still, dear. I will tell you more about it.

Rosmer. And you mean to say—that you have loved me—in that way!

Rebecca. I thought I might call it loving you—then. I thought it was love. But it was not. It was what I have said—a wild, uncontrollable passion.

Rosmer (*speaking with difficulty*). Rebecca—is it really you—you—who are sitting here telling me this?

Rebecca. Yes, indeed it is, John.

Rosmer. Then it was as the outcome of this—and under the influence of this—that you "acted," as you called it.

Rebecca. It swept over me like a storm over the sea—like one of the storms we have in winter in the north. They catch you up and rush you along with them, you know, until their fury is expended. There is no withstanding them.

Rosmer. So it swept poor unhappy Beata into the mill-race.

Rebecca. Yes—it was like a fight for life between Beata and me at that time.

Rosmer. You proved the strongest of us all at Rosmersholm—stronger than both Beata and me put together.

Rebecca. I knew you well enough to know that I could not get at you in any way until you were set free—both in actual circumstances and in your soul.

Rosmer. But I do not understand you, Rebecca. You—you yourself and your whole conduct—are an insoluble riddle to me. I am free now—both in my soul and my circumstances. You are absolutely in touch with the goal you set before yourself from the beginning. And nevertheless—

Rebecca. I have never stood farther from my goal than I do now.

Rosmer. And nevertheless, I say, when yesterday I asked you—urged you—to become my wife, you cried out that it never could be.

Rebecca. I cried out in despair, John.

Rosmer. Why?

Rebecca. Because Rosmersholm has unnerved me. All the courage has been sapped out of my will here—crushed out! The time has gone for me to dare risk anything whatever. I have lost all power of action, John.

Rosmer. Tell me how that has come about.

Rebecca. It has come about through my living with you.

Rosmer. But how? How?

Rebecca. When I was alone with you here—and you had really found yourself—

Rosmer. Yes, yes?

Rebecca. For you never really found yourself as long as Beata was alive—

Rosmer. Alas, you are right in that.

Rebecca. When it came about that I was living together with you here, in peace and solitude—when you exchanged all your thoughts with me unreservedly—your every mood, however tender or intimate—then the great change happened in me. Little by little, you understand. Almost imperceptibly—but overwhelmingly in the end, till it reached the uttermost depths of my soul.

Rosmer. What does this mean, Rebecca?

Rebecca. All the other feeling—all that horrible passion that had drowned my better self—left me

entirely. All the violent emotions that had been roused in me were quelled and silenced. A peace stole over my soul—a quiet like that of one of our mountain peaks up under the midnight sun.

Rosmer. Tell me more of it—all that you can.

Rebecca. There is not much more to tell. Only that this was how love grew up in my heart—a great, self-denying love—content with such a union of hearts as there has been between us two.

Rosmer. Oh, if only I had had the slightest suspicion of all this!

Rebecca. It is best as it is. Yesterday, when you asked me if I would be your wife, I gave a cry of joy—

Rosmer. Yes, it was that, Rebecca, was it not! I thought that was what it meant.

Rebecca. For a moment, yes—I forgot myself for a moment. It was my dauntless will of the old days that was struggling to be free again. But now it has no more strength—it has lost it for ever.

Rosmer. How do you explain what has taken place in you?

Rebecca. It is the Rosmer attitude towards life—or your attitude towards life, at any rate—that has infected my will.

Rosmer. Infected?

Rebecca. Yes, and made it sickly—bound it captive under laws that formerly had no meaning for me. You—my life together with you—have ennobled my soul—

Rosmer. Ah, if I dared believe that to be true!

Rebecca. You may believe it confidently. The Rosmer attitude towards life ennobles. But—(*shakes her head*)—but—but—

Rosmer. But? Well?

Rebecca. But it kills joy, you know.

Rosmer. Do you say that, Rebecca?

Rebecca. For me, at all events.

Rosmer. Yes, but are you so sure of that? If I asked you again now—? Implored you—?

Rebecca. Oh, my dear—never go back to that again! It is impossible. Yes, impossible—because I must tell you this, John. I have a—past behind me.

Rosmer. Something more than you have told me?

Rebecca. Yes, something more and something different.

Rosmer (*with a faint smile*). It is very strange, Rebecca, but—do you know—the idea of such a thing has occurred to me more than once.

Rebecca. It has? And yet—notwithstanding that, you—?

Rosmer. I never believed in it. I only played with the idea—nothing more.

Rebecca. If you wish, I will tell you all about it at once.

Rosmer (*stopping her*). No, no! I do not want to hear a word about it. Whatever it is, it shall be forgotten, as far as I am concerned.

Rebecca. But I cannot forget it.

Rosmer. Oh, Rebecca—!

Rebecca. Yes, dear—that is just the dreadful part of it—that now, when all the happiness of life is freely and fully offered to me, all I can feel is that I am barred out from it by my past.

Rosmer. Your past is dead, Rebecca. It has no longer any hold on you—has nothing to do with you—as you are now.

Rebecca. Ah, my dear, those are mere words, you know. What about innocence, then? Where am I to get that from?

Rosmer (*gloomily*). Ah, yes—innocence.

Rebecca. Yes, innocence—which is at the root of all joy and happiness. That was the teaching, you know, that you wanted to see realised by all the men you were going to raise up to nobility and happiness.

Rosmer. Ah, do not remind me of that. It was nothing but a half-dreamt dream, Rebecca—a rash suggestion that I have no longer any faith in. Human nature cannot be ennobled by outside influences, believe me.

Rebecca (*gently*). Not by a tranquil love, do you think?

Rosmer (*thoughtfully*). Yes, that would be a splendid thing—almost the most glorious thing in life, I think—

if it were so. (*Moves restlessly.*) But how am I ever to clear up the question?—how am I to get to the bottom of it?

Rebecca. Do you not believe in me, John?

Rosmer. Ah, Rebecca, how *can* I believe you entirely—you whose life here has been nothing but continual concealment and secrecy!—And now you have this new tale to tell. If it is cloaking some design of yours, tell me so—openly. Perhaps there is something or other that you hope to gain by that means? I will gladly do anything that I can for you.

Rebecca (*wringing her hands*). Oh, this killing doubt! John, John—!

Rosmer. Yes, I know, dear—it is horrible—but I cannot help it. I shall never be able to free myself from it—never be able to feel certain that your love for me is genuine and pure.

Rebecca. But is there nothing in your own heart that bears witness to the transformation that has taken place in me—and taken place through your influence, and yours alone!

Rosmer. Ah, my dear, I do not believe any longer in my power to transform people. I have no belief in myself left at all. I do not believe either in myself or in you.

Rebecca (*looking darkly at him*). How are you going to live out your life, then?

Rosmer. That is just what I do not know—and cannot imagine. I do not believe I *can* live it out. And, moreover, I do not know anything in the world that would be worth living for.

Rebecca. Life carries a perpetual rebirth with it. Let us hold fast to it, dear. We shall be finished with it quite soon enough.

Rosmer (*getting up restlessly*). Then give me my faith back again!—my faith in you, Rebecca—my faith in your love! Give me a proof of it! I must have some proof!

Rebecca. Proof? How can I give you a proof—!

Rosmer. You must! (*Crosses the room.*) I cannot bear this desolate, horrible loneliness—this—this—. (*A knock is heard at the hall door.*)

Rebecca (*getting up from her chair*). Did you hear that?

(*The door opens, and* ULRIK BRENDEL *comes in. Except that he wears a white shirt, a black coat and a good pair of high boots, he is dressed as in the first act. He looks troubled.*)

Rosmer. Ah, it is you, Mr. Brendel!

Brendel. John, my boy, I have come to say good-bye to you!

Rosmer. Where are you going, so late as this?

Brendel. Downhill.

Rosmer. How—?

Brendel. I am on my way home, my beloved pupil. I am homesick for the great Nothingness.

Rosmer. Something has happened to you, Mr. Brendel! What is it?

Brendel. Ah, you notice the transformation, then? Well, it is evident enough. The last time I entered your doors I stood before you a man of substance, slapping a well-filled pocket.

Rosmer. Really? I don't quite understand—

Brendel. And now, as you see me to-night, I am a deposed monarch standing over the ashes of my burnt-out palace.

Rosmer. If there is any way I can help you—

Brendel. You have preserved your childlike heart, John—can you let me have a loan?

Rosmer. Yes, most willingly!

Brendel. Can you spare me an ideal or two?

Rosmer. What do you say?

Brendel. One or two cast-off ideals? You will be doing a good deed. I am cleaned out, my dear boy, absolutely and entirely.

Rebecca. Did you not succeed in giving your lecture?

Brendel. No, fair lady. What do you think?—just as I was standing ready to pour out the contents of my horn of plenty, I made the painful discovery that I was bankrupt.

Rebecca. But what of all your unwritten works, then?

Brendel. For five and twenty years I have been like a miser sitting on his locked money-chest. And then

to-day, when I opened it to take out my treasure—there was nothing there! The mills of time had ground it into dust. There was not a blessed thing left of the whole lot.

Rosmer. But are you certain of that?

Brendel. There is no room for doubt, my dear boy. The President has convinced me of that.

Rosmer. The President?

Brendel. Oh, well—His Excellency, then. *Gans nach Belieben.*

Rosmer. But whom do you mean?

Brendel. Peter Mortensgaard, of course.

Rosmer. What!

Brendel (*mysteriously*). Hush, hush, hush! Peter Mortensgaard is Lord and Chieftain of the Future. I have never stood in a more august presence. Peter Mortensgaard has the power of omnipotence in him. He can do whatever he wants.

Rosmer. Oh, come—don't you believe that!

Brendel. It is true, my boy—because Peter Mortensgaard never wants to do more than he can. Peter Mortensgaard is capable of living his life without ideals. And *that*, believe me, is precisely the great secret of success in life. It sums up all the wisdom of the world. *Basta!*

Rosmer (*in a low voice*). Now I see that you are going away from here poorer than you came.

Brendel. Bien! Then take an example from your old tutor. Erase from your mind everything that he imprinted there. Do not build your castle upon the shifting sand. And look well ahead, and be sure of your ground, before you build upon the charming creature who is sweetening your life here.

Rebecca. Do you mean me?

Brendel. Yes, most attractive mermaid!

Rebecca. Why am I not fit to build upon?

Brendel (*taking a step nearer to her*). I understood that my former pupil had a cause which it was his life's work to lead to victory.

Rebecca. And if he has—?

Brendel. He is certain of victory—but, be it distinctly understood, on one unalterable condition.

Rebecca. What is that?

Brendel (*taking her gently by the wrist*). That the woman who loves him shall gladly go out into the kitchen and chop off her dainty, pink and white little finger—*here*, just at the middle joint. Furthermore, that the aforesaid loving woman shall—also gladly—clip off her incomparably moulded left ear. (*Lets her go, and turns to* ROSMER.) Good-bye, John the Victorious!

Rosmer. Must you go now—in this dark night?

Brendel. The dark night is best. Peace be with you! (*He goes out. Silence in the room for a short time.*)

Rebecca (*breathing heavily*). How close and sultry it is in here! (*Goes to the window, opens it and stands by it.*)

Rosmer (*sitting down on a chair by the stove*). There is nothing else for it after all, Rebecca—I can see that. You *must* go away.

Rebecca. Yes, I do not see that I have any choice.

Rosmer. Let us make use of our last hour together. Come over here and sit beside me.

Rebecca (*goes and sits down on the couch*). What do you want, John?

Rosmer. In the first place I want to tell you that you need have no anxiety about your future.

Rebecca (*with a smile*). Hm! *My* future!

Rosmer. I have foreseen all contingencies—long ago. Whatever may happen, you are provided for.

Rebecca. Have you even done that for me, dear?

Rosmer. You might have known that I should.

Rebecca. It is many a long day since I thought about anything of the kind.

Rosmer. Yes, of course. Naturally, you thought things could never be otherwise between us than as they were.

Rebecca. Yes, that was what I thought.

Rosmer. So did I. But if anything were to happen to me now—

Rebecca. Oh, John, you will live longer than I shall.

Rosmer. I can dispose of my miserable existence as I please, you know.

Rebecca. What do you mean? You surely are never thinking of—!

Rosmer. Do you think it would be so surprising? After the pitiful, lamentable defeat I have suffered? I, who was to have made it my life's work to lead my cause to victory—! And here I am, a deserter before the fight has even really begun!

Rebecca. Take up the fight again, John! Only try—and you will see that you will conquer. You will ennoble hundreds—thousands—of souls. Only try!

Rosmer. I, Rebecca, who no longer believe even in my having a mission in life?

Rebecca. But your mission has stood the test. You have at all events ennobled one of your fellow-creatures for the rest of her life—I mean myself.

Rosmer. Yes—if I dared believe you about that.

Rebecca (*wringing her hands*). But, John, do you know of nothing—nothing—that would make you believe that?

Rosmer (*starts, as if with fear*). Don't venture on that subject! No further, Rebecca! Not a single word more!

Rebecca. Indeed, that is just the subject we must venture upon. Do you know of anything that would stifle your doubts? For I know of nothing in the world.

Rosmer. It is best for you not to know. Best for us both.

Rebecca. No, no, no—I have no patience with that sort of thing! If you know of anything that would acquit me in your eyes, I claim it as my right that you should name it.

Rosmer (*as if impelled against his will*). Well, let us see. You say that you have great love in your heart; that your soul has been ennobled through me. Is that so? Have you counted the cost? Shall we try and balance our accounts? Tell me.

Rebecca. I am quite ready.

Rosmer. Then when shall it be?

Rebecca. Whenever you like. The sooner the better.

Rosmer. Then let me see, Rebecca, whether you—for my sake—this very night—. (*Breaks off.*) Oh, no, no!

Rebecca. Yes, John! Yes, yes! Say it, and you shall see.

Rosmer. Have you the courage—are you willing—gladly, as Ulrik Brendel said—for my sake, to-night—gladly—to go the same way—that Beata went!

Rebecca (*gets up slowly from the couch, and says almost inaudibly*): John—!

Rosmer. Yes, dear—that is the question I shall never be able to rid my thoughts of, when you have gone away. Every hour of the day I shall come back to it. Ah, I seem to see you bodily before me—standing out on the foot-bridge—right out in the middle. Now you lean out over the railing! You grow dizzy as you feel drawn down towards the mill-race! No—you recoil. You dare not do—what she dared.

Rebecca. But if I had the courage?—and willingly and gladly? What then?

Rosmer. Then I would believe in you. Then I should get back my faith in my mission in life—my faith in my power to ennoble my fellow men—my faith in mankind's power to be ennobled.

Rebecca (*takes up her shawl slowly, throws it over her head, and says, controlling herself*): You shall have your faith back.

Rosmer. Have you the courage and the strength of will for that, Rebecca?

Rebecca. Of that you must judge in the morning—or later—when they take up my body.

Rosmer (*burying his head in his hands*). There is a horrible temptation in this—!

Rebecca. Because I should not like to be left lying there—any longer than need be. You must take care that they find me.

Rosmer (*springing up*). But all this is madness, you know. Go away, or stay! I will believe you on your bare word this time too.

Rebecca. Those are mere words, John. No more cowardice or evasion! How can you believe me on my bare word after to-day?

Rosmer. But I do not want to see your defeat, Rebecca.

Rebecca. There will be no defeat.

Rosmer. There will. You will never have the heart to go Beata's way.

Rebecca. Do you believe that?

Rosmer. Never. You are not like Beata. You are not under the influence of a distorted view of life.

Rebecca. But I am under the influence of the Rosmersholm view of life—now. Whatever my offences are—it is right that I should expiate them.

Rosmer (*looking at her fixedly*). Have you come to *that* decision?

Rebecca. Yes.

Rosmer. Very well. Then I too am under the influence of our unfettered view of life, Rebecca. There is no one that can judge us. And therefore we must be our own judges.

Rebecca (*misunderstanding his meaning*). That too. That too. My leaving you will save the best that is in you.

Rosmer. Ah, there is nothing left to save in me.

Rebecca. There is. But I—after this I should only be like some sea-sprite hanging on to the barque you are striving to sail forward in, and hampering its progress. I must go overboard. Do you think I could go through the world bearing the burden of a spoiled life—brooding for ever over the happiness which I have forfeited by my past? I must throw up the game, John.

Rosmer. If you go—then I go with you.

Rebecca (*looks at him with an almost imperceptible smile, and says more gently*): Yes, come with me, dear—and be witness—

Rosmer. I go with you, I said.

Rebecca. As far as the bridge—yes. You never dare go out on to it, you know.

Rosmer. Have you noticed that?

Rebecca (*in sad and broken tones*). Yes. That was what made my love hopeless.

Rosmer. Rebecca—now I lay my hand on your head.

(*Does as he says.*) And I take you for my true and lawful wife.

Rebecca (*taking both his hands in hers, and bowing her head on to his breast*). Thank you, John. (*Lets him go.*) And now I am going—gladly.

Rosmer. Man and wife should go together.

Rebecca. Only as far as the bridge, John.

Rosmer. And out on to it, too. As far as you go—so far I go with you. I dare do it now.

Rebecca. Are you absolutely certain that way is the best for you?

Rosmer. I know it is the only way.

Rebecca. But suppose you are only deceiving yourself? Suppose it were only a delusion—one of these White Horses of Rosmersholm?

Rosmer. It may be so. We can never escape from them—we of my race.

Rebecca. Then stay, John!

Rosmer. The man shall cleave to his wife, as the wife to her husband.

Rebecca. Yes, but first tell me this—is it you that go with me, or I that go with you?

Rosmer. We shall never get to the bottom of that.

Rebecca. Yet I should dearly like to know.

Rosmer. We two go with each other, Rebecca. I with you, and you with me.

Rebecca. I almost believe that is true.

Rosmer. For now we two are one.

Rebecca. Yes. We are one now. Come! We can go gladly now. (*They go out, hand in hand, through the hall, and are seen to turn to the left. The door stands open after them. The room is empty for a little while. Then* MRS. HELSETH *opens the door on the right.*)

Mrs. Helseth. The carriage, miss, is—. (*Looks round the room.*) Not here? Out together at this time of night? Well, well—I must say—! Hm! (*Goes out into the hall, looks round and comes in again.*) Not sitting on the bench—ah, well! (*Goes to the window and looks out.*) Good heavens! What is that white thing—! As I am a living soul, they are both out on the foot-bridge! God forgive the

sinful creatures—if they are not in each other's arms! (*Gives a wild scream.*) Ah!—they are over—both of them! Over into the mill-race! Help! help! (*Her knees tremble, she holds on shakily to the back of a chair and can scarcely get her words out.*) No. No help here. The dead woman has taken them.

THE END

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